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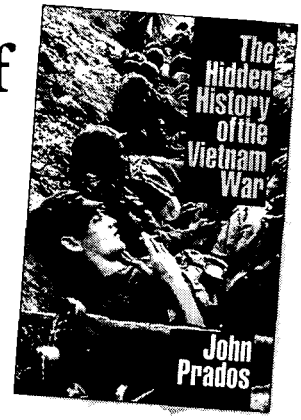

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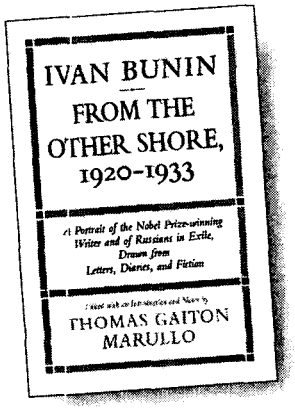
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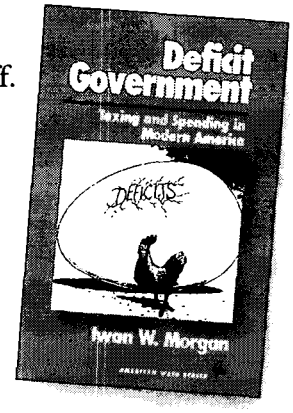

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Editor's Page

Should we, half a century later, reconsider the morality of Hiroshima? "No," will retort apostles of what may be called "Patriotic Correctness." (I borrow the phrase from Robert Hughes.) For these PCers, self-questioning is always tantamount to anti-Americanism.

But a democracy must always ask itself troubling questions, even about a war in which our side was so clearly in the right. This is why it is vital to think through "principles governing the conduct of war...of democratic peoples," as John Rawls writes in a symposium on Hiroshima in this *Dissent*. Moreover, historical memory is essential to a polity's self-understanding. "The morality of memory," notes Michael Walzer, "applies to us" no less than to other countries.

Patriotic Correctness substitutes ardor for argument; it sidesteps the moral and political questions that are decisive for democratic well being. So, after the Oklahoma City bombing, "mainstream" conservatives were "indignant" when challenged to think about the overlap between their political obsessions and those of the radical right. No inquiries, please—about overheated clamor against Washington; about pandering to the National Rifle Association; about exploiting race problems for political gain; about embracing Pat Robertson, with his apocalyptic, conspiratorial world-view and fundamentalist foot soldiers.

A cardinal component of 1960s Patriotic Correctness was in focus again this past spring. "We were wrong, terribly wrong," declared the ex-defense secretary who presided over our descent into a disastrous war three decades ago. When Robert McNamara's concession came, it was with a relentless insistence: however terrible the policy sin, the sinner could not have behaved differently, either while in office or after, as Richard Nixon continued the war.

Such moral acrobatics serve as a useful reminder of why many young Americans were radicalized in the 1960s, sometimes for good, sometimes for bad. Those blaming "the 1960s" for everything might, after McNamara's admission, reflect on just what set things amiss in that decade. Of course, one does not really expect such deliberation from a Gingrich or a Limbaugh. They need the sixties in order to distract Americans from afflictions more recent—what Republican administrations did in the 1980s—and those immediate—what right-wing politicians and radio hosts foster in the 1990s.

Their efforts have been effective, as David Plotke points out in his analysis of the "Contract With America." Indeed, while "postmodern" leftists were denouncing "metanarratives" in the academy, Republicans drew on stories and myths of what America was, is, and should be; linked them to a program; and harnessed American insecurities. The importance of alternative narratives from the left can be seen in Marshall Berman's presentation of human rights as "the fundamental modernist idea." (In a parallel argument, Elizabeth Kiss warns that feminists who spurn the concept of rights in the name of postmodernism imperil their own project.)

American insecurities are, in fact, due to structural transformations in the economy—the shift toward postindustrialism and globalization. Democratic government was once perceived as an essential counterweight to corporate power. Nowadays, as corporate power is strengthened by neoliberal globalization and as the ability of democratic regimes to set domestic priorities weakens (see Ian Robinson's article), Republicans insist: make national government less effectual. As if multinational corporations will, when "downsizing" American workers, be more responsive to state legislatures.

The right needs populist diversions precisely because its neo-states-rights proposals are irrelevant to structural economic change. Gingrich brands Democrats foes of "normal Americans" and Limbaugh bellows about "maggot-infested dope-smoking peace pansies" because smears are easier than explaining why, after a decade of Reaganomics, the richest 20 percent of households possess 80 percent of the country's wealth.

Time, perhaps, for a "metanarrative" for the other four-fifths of the population.

—M.C. □

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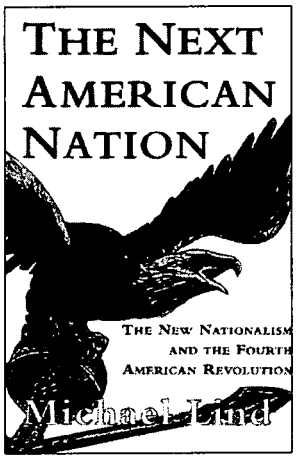

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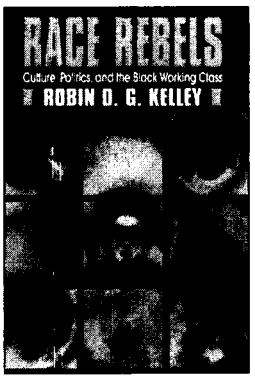

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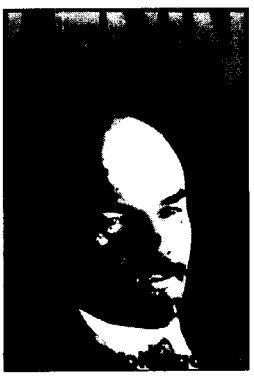

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Sean Wilentz

RACE, CELEBRITY, AND THE INTELLECTUALS

Notes on a Donnybrook

In *The Souls of Black Folk*, W.E.B. Du Bois reflected on the ironies of reaching the academic heights, always sensing his racial distinctiveness, always confronting the hesitant curiosity of sympathetic whites, always coping with their unasked question: "How does it feel to be a problem?" Since then, after enormous tumult and struggle, race relations in the intelligentsia have improved enormously, but not so enormously that the question does not linger. Although the number of black scholars and non-academic writers is now greater than it was, one chronically feels the strain of racial perplexity, of psychological projection back and forth across the color line. And alongside Du Bois's painful old question there has arisen a new one: "How does it feel to be a celebrity?"

Media hype about the new black intellectuals has been building gradually over the past decade, marking the arrival of a generation of black writers and academics who came of age in the wake of the civil rights movement. In the mid-1980s, American politics began turning back to issues of race and racism—and here was a group of young well-educated, highly articulate black voices, burning to speak out on these matters and many others. What's more, it was, as should have been expected, a complicated group, united in rejecting America's racist past but divided about almost everything else, with viewpoints that ranged all the way from Reagan conservatism to Afrocentrism. Surely their appearance was an important, even a historic event, signaling a long-delayed turn in our national intellectual life.

As time passed, additional hype began to build around specific black authors, helped along by the commercial efforts of their agents, editors, and publishers. Over the past year or so, however, the hype has been picked up by writers for the national media and turned into more disturbing forms of celebrity mongering—the latest example of a trend that has gripped almost every field of artistic and academic endeavor. And some of the mongering has managed to slip into some unexpected places. The grandest puff appeared last winter in a group review by Michael Bérubé that turned up in the *New Yorker*. Shortly thereafter, in the *Atlantic Monthly*, came Robert S. Boynton's essay, "The New Intellectuals," a more thoughtful piece than Bérubé's, but not free of celebrity mongering conceits.

Not every critic, however, has been impressed, either by the growing air of celebration or by all of the writers being celebrated. More or less at the same time as Bérubé's and Boynton's pieces appeared, Leon Wieseltier delivered a harsh review in the *New Republic* of Cornel West's political and philosophical writings, and touched off a large row. Soon after came Michael Lerner's attack on Wieseltier in *Tikkun*, followed by Jon Wiener's attack in the *Nation* on Wieseltier and the *New Republic*, followed by Ellen Willis's assessment in the *Village Voice* of both West and Wieseltier's review of West, followed by rejoinders, rejoinders-to-rejoinders, and adjudications that are still being composed and printed as I write this in early April.

An old-fashioned intellectual donnybrook, fought out in the high-brow weeklies, monthlies, and quarterlies, is always exciting. But this one, given the touchiness of the issues involved, and given that it broke out against a background of the celebrity cult, also has had features that make one wince. Those features reveal something of the

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parlous state of our culture in general.

The troubled connections between intellectual camps and celebrityhood are, it is true, nothing new. Writers and critics have always wanted to draw attention to their words and ideas, and for many this has involved joining with others in an identifiable group. Traditionally, most authors enjoyed limited resources, and were restricted to banding together with a few like-minded souls, adopting a collective label, and making their presence felt with a manifesto or, even better, a magazine. Television changed all that. By the mid-1960s, some individual writers had come to understand the uses of a well-crafted television persona, in promoting their words and ideas. And so, with the aid of literate talk-show hosts such as Dick Cavett, a new figure, the modern celebrity writer, was born.

Today, television of the bookish Cavett variety remains an important component in achieving a certain literary stature. But in other parts of the culture, including print culture, the celebrity-writer cult has sunk lower and lower, fastening on to every sort of author, from novelists to social critics to professors of literature, and portraying them like movie stars or rock stars—famous for how they act or look, their ideas reduced to performance *shtick*. (Think of such modern academic figures as Camille Paglia or, on a smaller scale, Andrew Ross—both of them formally professors, both of them cultural critics, but both of them also media celebrities of a kind hardly imaginable forty years ago.) One can win approval from the celebrity venues or one can be subjected to a hatchet job, like the one *Vanity Fair* recently performed on Leon Wieseltier. But the main thing about this brand of journalism is that it has little or nothing to do with ideas and everything to do with personalities.

The celebrity cult has, to be sure, hardly conquered every corner of American literary and academic life. Most writers, critics, and scholars undertake their work with neither the expectation of becoming nor the desire to become celebrity hot shots (although it is difficult not to experience at least occasional flashes of envy, especially when one's friends or colleagues make it big). Nor are the celebrity writers innocent fodder for the celebrity machine. Some are plain poseurs; others are honorable men and women who have chosen, if only momentarily, to be distracted from their honorable labors. Nevertheless, the structures of celebrityhood have impinged more and more upon American writers, including those in the world that I know best, the university humanities, where conversations about "superstars" and stupendous salaries and the art of the deal (sometimes involving actual movie contracts) have entered into everyday shoptalk with increasing frequency.

There are numerous points where celebrityhood converges with those older forms of literary and academic fame in which reputations derive from the power of one's thoughts and expressions. Still, the encroaching combination of celebrity temptations and writerly egotism, in all of its forms, has created a new and treacherous standard of desire and accomplishment, especially for younger scholars and authors, both inside and outside the universities. And the celebrity cult is peculiarly treacherous for everyone—readers and writers, editors and publishers, of all colors—where the young black writers are concerned. Early on, it appeared as if all the attention might reduce old racial misunderstandings of the sort that Du Bois had to deal with. Now, however, it seems as if celebrity coverage is reinforcing those misperceptions and helping to create new ones.

In the world of media celebrity, it is easy enough to transform a group of authors with disparate views into a coherent camp, simply by calling attention to their appearances—in the case of the black writers, the color of their skin—and declaring that it is so. And by the rules of celebrity journalism, seizing upon the black writers not only makes sense; it also has a kind of confused liberal nobility about it. Many of these writers fit the desirable celebrity profile, with their youth, stylishness, and outspokenness. Their academic degrees and seriousness of purpose offer an authentic touch of intellectual class. And, of course, they are black, a fact that gives left-leaning white critics the chance to affirm their anti-racist bona fides. Yet no matter how honorable the critics' conscious intentions may be, the formulas and imperatives of celebrity writing have become so deeply entrenched that their commentaries wind up sounding depressingly familiar even when they appear in the best magazines.

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One requirement in this kind of writing is the pitch, delivered Hollywood-style in the form of a question: What previous group does this new group remind you of? Both Bérubé and Boynton, the most prominent celebrants, have a ready answer—the New York Intellectuals of the 1950s and 1960s. It matters little that the pitch confers upon the older New York writers a kind of media celebrity that they never enjoyed in their prime; granting celebrity retrospectively is sufficient to the task of creating a framing analogy that will grab the attention of editors and readers, and make the newcomers seem bankable.

With the pitch completed, the analogy gets developed (along with the side references to other celebrities) less on the basis of what the new writers think than on the basis of how well known they are, what jobs they have held, who their friends are, how they dress, and what they own. Thus Bérubé compares Cornel West's collection of popular essays, *Race Matters*, to Lionel Trilling's *The Liberal Imagination,* not because of their respective merits or arguments, but because of how many copies they sold, how influential they have purportedly been. Thus Bérubé informs us, with no trace of irony, that another black writer publishes her books "in apparent accord with the Bruce Springsteen approach to product placement," that she drives a BMW, and that she now holds the same title that Irving Howe once held at the City University of New York. Thus he discloses that still another black writer gets the most amazing blurbs for his books, including one from the rapper Chuck D. Thus Boynton likens appearances by black authors on *Today* or the *Charlie Rose Show* to the writings of Trilling and Alfred Kazin.

Then comes the plot synopsis, one that without too much caricaturing can be read along the following lines: once upon a time, there was a group of intellectuals, mostly New York Jews, who ruled the world of ideas. They grew older, some of them died, and it seemed as if we would never see their like again. Enter, somewhat unexpectedly (and in the nick of time), the new black intellectuals, men and women, Bérubé tells us, "who can leap from Kierkegaard to KRS-One in a single bound." It's a stirring story, but it's also simple enough to be summarized in the form of a movie trailer. From the same people who brought you *The End of Ideology* and *A Walker in the City* comes a new intellectual blockbuster. Or, as the *Atlantic Monthly* announced on its cover: "Suddenly, they're back. And they're black."

There are, without question, plausible grounds for likening the younger black writers to the older New York Intellectuals, as Boynton takes pains to explain. The rise of both groups, broadly speaking, represented an entry of ethnic outsiders to a degree of public notice as respected thinkers. Both groups, again broadly speaking, have managed to straddle the academy and the world of commercial book publishing, the magazines and reviews, and even (in some cases) politics. And there are additional likenesses as well, which neither Bérubé nor Boynton examine. The work of both the New Yorkers and the younger black writers, for example, has a tendency to interpret politics in cultural ways and culture in political ways, a tendency that has been limiting as well as illuminating.

But to develop the last of these comparisons would require being more substantive and more critical of both sets of writers than the structures of celebrity journalism allow. Instead, we are treated to more sensational and sometimes invidious themes. "Like so many stories these days," Boynton remarks, "this one is about blacks and Jews," a point he then develops at great length, suggesting the blacks are moving into the Jews' old turf, resulting in the usual tension. (Bérubé also brings this up, but more cursorily.) Yet by the time the comparison is played out, it is hard to see *what* the story has to do with the ones about blacks and Jews. Indeed, in the end, it appears that the entire analogy between the New York Intellectuals and the young black writers is shaky.

Insofar as they have cohered as distinct groups, the New Yorkers and the younger blacks have spoken in remarkably different ways to different publics and about different subjects. By and large, the New Yorkers said little about race relations and a great deal about high modernism and communism; the black writers have had a lot to say on the first subject and relatively little on the others. The New Yorkers, in general, only attached themselves to the academy *after* they had won their reputations, and the attachments were usually weak; many of the leading black writers won their early reputations

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as academics (and they are still best-known by other academics).The New Yorkers started out indifferent (and in some cases resistant) to their Jewish background and identity and only later became curious and even obsessed with these subjects; many of the leading new black writers, although always concerned with issues of race and identity, have followed approximately the opposite trajectory, moving from 1960s black power to a rejection of pat racial labels. The New Yorkers, in flight from 1930s left-wing philistinism, mistrusted folk culture and mass culture (although they were not above occasional *spritzing* in the vernacular); many of the young black writers feel at home writing about black street culture and mass culture, treating them as if they were at least potentially liberating forces. By these lights, all that the two groups seem to have in common is the critics' determination to force them into congruence with each other, in the manner of one of the old Miller Analogy tests given to prospective college students—Trotskyism is to Irving Kristol as black nationalism is to: (a) Stanley Crouch; (b) Stephen Carter; (c) Randall Kennedy; (d) none of the above.

Even more invidious is the liberal racialism that lurks within the celebrations—nothing as sinister as outright racism, but a distortion that grows from a fixation on race. As Willis points out, much of the media oversell of the younger black writers bespeaks a kind of "reverse *Bell Curv*ism," in which the fact that a black person earns a Ph.D., let alone writes a book, gets greeted with exaltation and virtually uncritical reviews. (This, at least, the New York Intellectuals were spared.) But the racialism also runs deeper than that, and is embedded in the very category of "black intellectuals." What started out as a historic change in American intellectual life has been turned by the celebrity pieces into a glamorous artificial ghetto, where the writers' most salient characteristic is their skin complexion.

In part, this ghettoization involves grouping together under the same heading authors who have little enough in common with respect to style or outlook or even talent. (Is there not some loss of critical perspective when established scholars get lumped together with aspiring academic pundits and popular journalists as black intellectuals?) More important, the celebrations have ignored how many of their subjects have thrived in part because of their close working relations and intellectual affinities with nonblack writers and critics as well as with blacks—a closeness that has invigorated all involved, regardless of color. To discuss, say, the work of Thomas Sowell, as Bérubé does, with only a perfunctory reference to his links with his white conservative colleagues is fundamentally to distort the context of his work and theirs. Change the political labels and the same could be said about West or Gates. (Indeed, both Gates and West have spoken on numerous occasions about their close ties with mentors, colleagues, and associates, black and white.) And the same could be said about some of the best new journals edited by younger black writers, like Randall Kennedy's *Reconstruction*, an ambitious interracial venture in political and cultural commentary. But that side of things doesn't fit with the celebrity story line, which is and can only be a racialist story line.

This problem is compounded by a double bind in which too many black writers find themselves trapped. At one level, black scholars and critics and artists are expected by the media (and sometimes each other) to express their views publicly on the current state of race relations, an expectation that is not placed on white colleagues. The philosopher Richard Rorty, for example, need not comment on contemporary racial politics in order to qualify as an intellectual; black writers who do not do so (or who do not do so *enough*) do not turn up in the reports on the new black intellectuals; or they turn up only as secondary figures. At another level, those black writers who do comment on these subjects get described and judged mainly on the basis of those comments, as when Boynton offers thumbnail sketches of various authors' thoughts on issues like racial essentialism and American citizenship. The black writers' other thoughts—which may be their most powerful thoughts—get short shrift. Stanley Crouch, for example, has made large contributions (to my way of thinking, his largest) in his writings on jazz; yet Boynton pays these only passing notice. Stephen Carter's reflections on religion in American life, to take another example, have larger purposes than to remark on race relations, yet these purposes remain vague in Boynton's essay. The cumulative effect is at once to slight various individuals and

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to promote a very narrow conception of intellectual life—a conception that no one could dare associate with nonblack writers.

Cutting through all of the dilemmas and evasions and misplaced emphases of the celebrity mode is a difficult business, and not just because doing so is almost guaranteed to offend the celebrities' fans. Consider, for example, the recent critical discussions of West's work by Wieseltier and Willis. The two critics differ in tone: whereas Willis is cool and wry, Wieseltier is aggressive, even fierce (and made to sound all the more fierce by the *New Republic's* inflammatory cover announcing "The Decline of the Black Intellectual"). They approach the matter of West's celebrity in very different ways: Wieseltier ignores it almost completely, and judges West's work on its own, while Willis pokes exasperated fun at West's fame. The two critics are also worlds apart in their political stances, which comes as no surprise to their longtime readers. Yet they object to the same passages in West's books and articles, places where West's logic falters, where his writing turns to attitudinizing, and where he seems to be composing his own press releases, likening himself to Du Bois or Ralph Ellison.

There is plenty of this sort of thing in West's prose, and it deserves the scrutiny that his critics give it. But is it the most important thing? Fortunately Wieseltier and Willis do not stop there, but go on to consider West's more substantive remarks through their very different frames. Wieseltier approaches the writings as those of a formal political philosopher and theologian, and he finds them extremely wanting—contradictory in their pragmatic premises, scatterbrained in their Social Gospel Christianity, and woefully inattentive to matters of moral responsibility. Willis, meanwhile, sees West as a coddled academic eminence who has gotten too far too fast, and who, besides, is imprisoned in Christian dogma and puritanical bourgeois morality.

Ironically, however, the critics, in trying to separate the work from its context (and celebrity hype) and to describe its intellectual core, end up missing some of its important facets and nuances. Part of what is missing has to do with West's main intellectual and political preoccupation, improving the plight of the urban black poor. To Wieseltier, West is the sort of leftist who excuses the moral failings of the deprived by blaming those failings on capitalism. To Willis, he is the sort of (fellow) leftist who has forsaken the cultural radicalism of the 1960s and who espouses repressive Protestant values. Yet neither view does justice to West's contributions, above all his attempts to break through the prevailing political impasse between conservative bootstrap moralism and leftist-liberal indifference to psychological and moral breakdown among the poor.

Writing in these pages on the theme of "Nihilism in Black America," West has contended that it is useless to discuss the wretched conditions of the black poor simply in terms either of moral deficiency or material deprivation. He is impatient with conservative moralists who, he notes, "talk about values and attitudes as if political and economic structures hardly exist," who discount the cumulative effects of black subjugation as if history did not matter, and who rarely mention the countless numbers of black poor "who act on the Protestant ethic and still remain at the bottom of the ladder." But West is just as tough on the other side, those he labels "liberal structuralists," for what he calls their "failure of nerve" in owning up to the ravaging effects of addiction and criminality among poor blacks:

> They hesitate to talk honestly about culture, the realm of meanings and values, because to do so may seem to lend itself too readily to conservative conclusions in the narrow ways Americans discuss race. If there is a hidden taboo among liberals it is to resist talking about values *too much* because it takes the focus away from structures, especially the positive role of government. But this failure leaves the existential and psychological realities of black people in the lurch. In this way, liberal structuralists neglect the battered identities rampant in black America.

West calls instead for a new departure, a politics of conversion—one that intellectually situates ghetto nihilism within cruel social conditions but does not, therefore, exonerate it. And that departure, he claims, will fail if it relies only on calls for liberal government programs; rather, it will also require the individual and cooperative efforts of the poor themselves to rid their neighborhoods of cynicism and self-destruction.

West's critics also slight what Wieseltier dis-

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misses too quickly as his "homiletic" endeavors. For all of his media celebrity—highlighted by his appearances with everyone from Bill Moyers and Oprah Winfrey—West does not restrict himself to the celebrity circuit, or to academic pow-wows, or to left-wing circles where he can call his political comrades to assembly. The politics of conversion, he writes, "shuns the limelight—a limelight that solicits status seekers and egomaniacs," but instead "stays on the ground among toiling everyday people." Although West does not always follow through on his own prescriptions, he follows through more than his critics describe, not least when he has taken to the pulpit on Sunday mornings in parts of Brooklyn and other poverty-stricken areas to challenge the racist demagoguery that has taken hold in growing portions of inner-city black America. Furthermore, well outside the celebrity mongers' gaze, he has also tried to open up lines of reasonable conversation where practically none exists anymore, or where the lines have become frayed—between black churches and elite universities, the democratic left and the U.S. Senate, blacks and Jews.

West may succeed in these things or he may fail; his record thus far is mixed both with respect to defining his "politics of conversion" and to putting them into practice. But if his undertakings are not as exalted as some of his admirers claim, neither are they as trivial as some of his critics claim. If there are models for the sort of intellectual that West is striving to become, one writer who comes to mind strongly is not any of the New York Jewish intellectuals or even any of West's black predecessors, but rather Michael Harrington, a man whom West acknowledges as one of his major influences. Harrington wrote thoughtfully on philosophical matters and political theory, always with an eye on current dilemmas and possibilities. But he was primarily a spellbinding orator, an organizer, and in his books, a provoker, one whose provocations (above all *The Other America*) left a strong and honorable mark on our time. And Harrington, although an atheist, was also an ethicist in a strongly Christian mode—influenced by his Catholic upbringing and his association with Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker group—one whose later writings, especially, raised the same sorts of moral issues that West, the black Protestant, is exploring.

West has not yet written anything nearly as politically effective as Harrington's best work, although he might do so if he allows himself the time. But that will not be easy, and not just because of his habit of speaking and writing all over the map. It will not be easy because of all the ways in which the world has changed since Harrington first arrived on the national scene. In 1963, it was possible to open the *New Yorker* and find Dwight Macdonald there descanting thoughtfully and at length about *The Other America*. Now in place of Macdonald there is Michael Bérubé celebrating *Race Matters* and works by the other new black intellectuals—a case of misjudgment, no doubt, but also a sign about more general trends in intellectual reportage. Whereas Harrington could count on tough remarks and rebuttals as well as praise, especially from his closest associates and friends, West and many of the other prominent black writers have been treated (at least until recently) to the sort of tumultuous acclaim that suffocates their better intentions. And Harrington, although courted by the powerful, did not have to contend with the mounting and corrupting temptations that beset today's aspiring intellectuals across the board—the jet-set lecture tours, the huge fees, the glare of glitzy publicity. In short, he did not have to confront today's cult of celebrity writerhood, a cult that has rewarded fakes, seduced honest but seducible writers, and garbled intelligent thought and debate.

The prospects are not encouraging. We have, as a nation, come to a strange pass. On the one hand, the right is ready to trash the National Endowment for the Humanities; and on the other hand, more liberal Americans are anxiously trying to bestow on some group of "progressive" writers and critics the mantle of supreme intellectual authority. The trashing and the anxiety—these are related symptoms, indicative of a deepening split in the American soul, a soul that has never lived easily with the life of the mind. Are we doomed to be a land of the idiot culture at one end and of celebrity thinkers at the other end? The racialized subtexts that have emerged of late only make this syndrome all the more troubling.

Robert Boynton tries to raise some of these issues toward the end of his essay, when he won-

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ders whether, in a country where "anything can be marketed," the new black writers will succumb to mere celebrity status. But it is not simply a matter of whether this writer or that group of writers will succumb to some abstract force. Rather, it is a matter of choice, of whether all of us—readers and writers, editors and publishers—can calmly reject the ghettoization and glamorization that go along with celebrity journalism and try to sustain a strenuous interracial intellectual life, based on disagreement as well as assent. That was the promise when the hype began a decade ago; and it is still not too late to redeem it. □

Jeffrey Scheuer

THE TELEVISION THING

It is by now a truism that television has usurped many of the traditional roles of political parties; more than that, it sometimes seems to have all but devoured the political process. Power flows to politicians and journalists who exploit the medium. The new "bosses" are the arbiters of visibility: Ted Koppel, Larry King, Phil Donahue. But if television is also, as right-wing media bashers have long insisted, a hotbed of liberalism, why have Republicans far outpaced Democrats in seizing the airwaves, with propaganda such as National Empowerment Television, the Christian Broadcasting Network, and the Republican Exchange Satellite Network? Why do right-wing voices predominate on so many talk shows? And why, in a television-dominated culture, is liberalism in such sorry retreat, and a snarling, philistine conservatism rampant?

The left has certainly made its share of strategic mistakes. Rightly or wrongly, it has been identified with several policies and postures—welfare, affirmative action, political correctness—that, merit aside, have given the right a polemical field day. But such issues alone haven't kept progressive views off the air or garbled their message. Rather, I suspect that for all the conservative whining about the liberal media, something quite different is going on.

The values and messages of the right—small government, laissez-faire, rugged individualism, its views on defense, crime, the family—are essentially simple and visceral; those of the left are implicitly more intricate and cerebral. And television, in all its forms and aspects, is an essentially simplifying and sensationalizing medium, perfectly suited to visceral, uncomplicated messages. So here is a contrarian claim: television is the ideal vehicle not just for divisive, polemical sound bites and attack ads, but for conservatism. Far from being the left's handmaiden, TV is in fact a bonanza for the right, and a powerful brake on liberalism.

Several grounds for this claim are obvious and economic. These include: commercial sponsorship and network ownership by large corporations without progressive social agendas; the high cost of entry; viewer demographics that favor upscale consumers; and the symbiosis between television and money in the electoral sphere, which has vastly escalated the cost of political action and communication, and hence the corrupting power of cash. (In a roughly similar way, the TV-money nexus has corrupted professional sports.) There are related institutional and ideological barriers. For every Michael Kinsley on the left, in what passes for partisan televised debate, there's a crowd on the right—Buckley, Buchanan, Limbaugh, Novak, Sununu, McLaughlin. At the same time, ostensibly nonpartisan mainstream television journalism—especially reporting—is ideologically wedded to the center.

Even among left-leaning media critics, too little attention has been paid to the purely *structural* effects of television on the political mind. I'm referring not to who gets on the tube, or who

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pays for it, but to filters intrinsic to the medium that make up its technological "persona": its peculiar epistemic powers and limitations as a kinetic, audiovisual experience, and the impact of these traits on the kinds of messages we receive and the ways we interpret them.

Others have noted television's connection to various social pathologies: how it isolates us, not only from neighbors and fellow citizens but from our own families; how it stereotypes, trivializes, and fabricates. The world within the tube is in fact an entire realm of consciousness—a parallel universe that is logically distinct from, yet blurs with, displaces, and falsifies, the external world (for example, Dan Quayle's debate with Murphy Brown). Television is widely reported to encourage violent and antisocial behavior and obsessions with self-gratification, beauty, vicarious sex and athletics, and manic consumerism.

But what television also does is to atomize and compartmentalize information. It has an almost limitless capacity to manipulate: to disjoin and disintegrate, to wrench from context, to ignore, and to change the subject. In its rapid pace and narrative logic, its thirst for action, emotion, and conflict, its resistance to units of meaning larger than the sound bite, television systematically "keeps it simple, stupid." As a result, simple messages get through; complicated ones do not. Simple slogans and visual symbols, with far more emotional punch than cognitive impact, thrive on TV, proverbial chewing gum for the mind. More serious analyses, and more abstract ideas, are less telegenic both structurally and commercially. This is all the more true for ideas that depart from the status quo; what the camera sees *is* the status quo, not projected alternatives.

There is no right-wing conspiracy in all of this, and exceptions exist, though they don't abound. The best programming isn't necessarily the most subversive. Simplicity has its place—and so does a dignified conservatism. Likewise, complexity has its limits and tactical liabilities. But, the fact remains that by manufacturing mass simplification, television is dispositionally (if inadvertently) hospitable to the core themes of the right—dignified and otherwise.

This is not a polemical claim, but an observation about the nature of ideology and the logic of political discourse. The core differentiating feature of the political spectrum—underlying ideological differences about justice, equality, economics, and the like—is the moral and intellectual commitment to a more-or-less complex view, not just of government but, inferentially, of society and of causality itself. The democratic left postulates a more complex view than the right, and a more comprehensive and ambitious agenda, with multiple spheres and layers affecting the lives of societies and individuals: a more panoramic view of the moral-political enterprise that looks not only at the visible, but at patterns, contexts, and interconnections. Even when the voices for change are simplistic or sloganeering, demanding peace, jobs, equality, or a greener planet, the underlying values are more inclusive and far-reaching.

Intellectual conservatives project a simpler and more divisive vision: a Hobbesian world of existential agents (buzz word: responsibility) with fewer rights and fewer duties. It is an essentially positivist vision, more dissociative than connective, more bound to the visible and the obvious, and hostile to collectivities and abstract forces. And precisely the same is true of television, with its adherence to the visual and the immediate, and its aversion to anything abstract, unseen, ambiguous, or analytical. Television disdains as "talking heads" the very sort of intelligent discourse on which democracy has been predicated since the Greeks. This isn't the fault of journalists, programmers, or sponsors; it's in the nature of the medium. A Kennedy might exploit it (although as a prism for personal charisma, not as a conduit for ideas); Reagan and Gingrich, with essentially simple, self-regarding messages, are products of it.

American society is rapidly becoming more complex, and so are the tools of discourse—reasons, perhaps, for people to seek political refuge in simple, divisive slogans and homilies. The left's only remedy, as Roderick Hart argues in his excellent study *Seducing America*, is to develop a cogent, educative (but nonacademic) critique of television. A critical ethic is needed, and should extend to all electronic media: let's not forget the fever swamp of talk radio, or the imminent powers of video, hypertext, and interactive CD-ROM to put brains to bed.

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Such a critique must reckon with the intrinsically conservative character of television. It must explore (through rigorous analyses like those of Shanto Iyengar and Kiku Adatto) the social, psychological, moral, and ideological impact of television, especially on the young. It should create a framework for critical viewing based, like critical thinking in general, on informal logic, rational self-awareness, and common sense. And it must counterbalance television with reading, thinking, and discussion.

A warning label should come with any such effort: critical thinking about media is inherently subversive, anticommercial, and egalitarian, and so it will be vigorously opposed by the right. But there will be no great victories for the left until the battle of television is joined, and the argument for complexity begun. □

Frank Hearn

THE REAL POSTMODERNIST

The two appear to have nothing in common but an appearance on David Letterman's *The Late Show*. Relaxed, smoking a cigar, and toying with the host, she broke the record for vulgarity on network television. Smiling nervously and awkwardly swinging his hands, he stood at a distance from Dave, shouting "Patooki" to illustrate one of the top ten ways of mispronouncing his name. She, of course, is Madonna—flamboyant celebrant of out-of-wedlock birth and virtually all other transgressions of papa's preachings. He is George Pataki, the staid governor of New York, recently elected in part for his promise to punish illegitimacy and restore respect for conventional conduct. Beneath these stylistic differences lies a common force—postmodern capitalism. It is a truly revolutionary force; both Madonna and the governor are, as their supporters claim, revolutionaries.

Madonna's revolutionary credentials are validated by postmodern intellectuals and academics. These cultural postmodernists lead the revolution against the modern by exposing its core—stable, ordered, permanent arrangements, attachments, and identities that structure human existence in ways that serve the interests of white heterosexual males. Hence, Madonna as revolutionary icon. She ruptures boundaries, breaches conventional roles and rules, and breaks through the repressive restraints of gender, race, and other traditional markers of identity. Hers is the fluid and chaotic world of the contingent and the impermanent, a world bereft of certainties, and thus a liberated world where people are free to reinvent themselves at will.

The beast—modern structures affording stability, continuity, and some small peace of mind—was defanged long before the cultural postmodernists plunged the sword of deconstruction into its chest. For twenty years, American corporations have been restructuring with a vengeance in an effort to achieve the flexibility demanded by the chaotic, volatile market conditions of postmodern global capitalism. Anticipating the culural postmodernists' attack on the patriarchal Western canon (and Madonna's cry of "Papa don't preach!"), the postmodern corporation has fought to do away with such paternalistic protections as job security, health insurance, pension plans, union contracts, government safety regulations, and income-maintenance programs.

Indeed, the architects of the flexible corporation, recently featured in cover stories in *Business Week* and *Fortune*, make their own contributions to the Pomo vocabulary. The postmodern corporation must be capable of "continually reinventing" itself. Unburdened by lifetime employment

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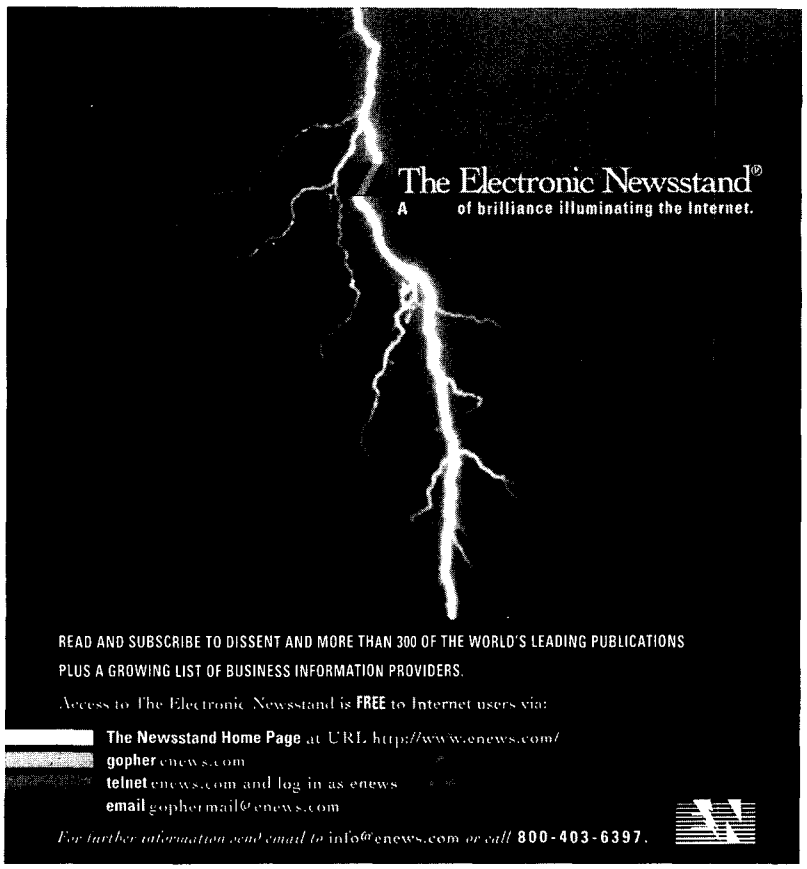
and job security, it is a "post-job organization" that replaces conventional job roles with ever-changing "part-time and temporary work situations," and that relies on "post-job employees," members of an impermanent, contingent work force, who, in the absence of career-based boundaries and identities, acquire the freedom to regularly reconstitute themselves as well. Given their capacity to quickly alter what they do and who they are, postmodern corporations and their post-job employees, we're told, welcome instability and unpredictability.

The postmodern corporation is better positioned than postmodern intellectuals to usher in the no-guarantee world of short-term, part-time relations and identities. To do this, it needs the assistance of real postmodernists. Like other Republican revolutionaries, George Pataki fits the bill. His proposed budget would slash the taxes and regulations that constrain corporate flexibility and would reduce state expenditures on education and welfare programs. The governor's plan is to democratize and multiculturalize the postmodern condition of unpredictability, bringing the liberating air of anxious uncertainty equally to the daughter of a middle-income African-American family attending the State University of New York, to the severely arthritic middle-aged woman whose meager check from the Home Relief program keeps her just this side of homelessness, and to the gay paraplegic who finds companionship and rehabilitation in an adult-care center.

In those without the right amount of money or the right kind of education or talent, the world of postmodern capitalism evokes the bewilderment, the distrust, and the sense of danger and foreboding usually produced by disaster and extreme adversity. For them, the postmodern condition of unpredictability is a mean-spirited and stupid human trick. In this context, the governor and Madonna might consider a joint appearance on an upcoming Letterman show. □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Peter Mandler

LETTER FROM LONDON

The Americanization of Britain?

A few years ago, pundits on both sides of the water were pleased to announce the imminent convergence of British and American politics. There were said to be international forces at work too powerful for merely national political cultures to resist. Between them Reagan and Thatcher (with some help from Gorbachev and Yeltsin) had demolished their two countries' left-wing parties, big governments, and welfare states, but also carried their own free-market policies too far; in 1992 it was confidently expected that both British and American electorates would turn to parties of the center: Clinton's New Democrats and a Clintonized Labor party.

Since 1992, however, punditry has fallen strangely silent on this theme. Only half of the electoral program was realized—Clinton's victory but not Labor's. Then it appeared that neither was Clinton stable nor was the American electorate in the mood for centrist consolidation. What about the other half of the forecast? What happened to those international pressures on ideologues of the right and left—are they still operating in Britain, even if in America Rush Limbaugh has managed singlehandedly to beat them off? Is Tony Blair Clintonizing the Labor party—and will the results be as disastrous?

It would be foolish to deny that some very powerful forces extrinsic to British culture and government have changed the face of politics here in the last twenty years. The autonomy of one small state's economic policies has been in question at least since Britain became the first advanced industrial economy to accept International Monetary Fund (IMF) direction (in 1976). In the autumn of 1992, international monetary speculation again humbled the politicians by forcing a devaluation against explicit government policy, in much the same way that markets have been dictating to Clinton this year on the fate of the dollar and the peso. Intense international competition in the energy, transport, and telecommunications fields has put pressure on the old state monopolies here as elsewhere in Europe. The result has been privatization across the continent, under left- as well as right-wing governments, although in few places more extensively than in Britain, where oil, natural gas, water, coal, steel, automotive and aerospace, docks and airports, freight transport, buses, airlines, telephones, and many smaller state investments have been fully or partially sold off.

Social changes affecting most advanced Western countries have also altered the composition of the electorate. The dominance of the male working class has been challenged by deindustrialization, new technologies, and feminization. Even among men alone, the proportion of the work force in the old manual and unskilled trades has dropped from two-thirds to half. The proportion of households owning their own homes has risen from under half to over two-thirds. The proportion of young people going on to college at age eighteen has increased by 50 percent. These changes have weakened the traditional class solidarities that provided Labor with its electoral machine and internal culture, though not necessarily its votes. At the same time, the technical and managerial classes—the fastest growing section of the work force—have been beset by job, housing and social insecurity. Many of the new technical jobs are in part-time or contract work. College tuition is still free but underfunded, and parents now have to pay for students' living expenses. The costs of private health insurance and schools—two status symbols traditionally required to qualify for "middle-classness"—are proving beyond the reach of the new

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middle class. So the breakdown of the traditional working class is also accompanied by signs of the "three-speed society" familiar elsewhere—a top third prosperous, a bottom third dependent on deteriorating state services, a middle third scrambling in a panicky way from the bottom but failing even to approach the top.

The face of British politics has also been changed in subtler ways. British politicians are not the confident, intellectual patricians that they once were—or if they are, they seek to hide the fact. A slick, classless, professional style is in vogue which makes them all look and sound alike, and more like their colleagues elsewhere in the world. The grip that top private schools like Eton and the elite universities of Oxford and Cambridge used to have on the leaderships of both Labor and the Conservatives has undeniably weakened. Prime Minister John Major left school at sixteen and worked as a bus conductor and a bank clerk. His opposite number at the head of Labor, Tony Blair, went to private school and Oxford, but this makes him unusual in Labor's front ranks; his principal comrades went to Scottish and provincial universities, except for his deputy leader, John Prescott, who hails (equally unusually) from the manual working class and is a former trade-union official. But whatever their real background, most leading politicians nowadays try to hide behind a studied shapelessness and evasiveness, partly the consequence of television and partly owing to the powerful structural changes with which they have to deal. The voters seem so fickle, so hard to please, and government seems so weak, so powerless to please them. In such a world, it's hard to be a fighting left-winger, hard to make promises of dramatic social change that you'll be able to keep—but it's equally hard to be a doctrinaire right-winger.

These are the contexts in which we have to judge Tony Blair and the "New Labor" party that he claims to be shaping. Some of the changes that Blair and his predecessors Neil Kinnock and John Smith have set afoot were probably inevitable. The organized male industrial working class could not, for instance, continue to play the dominant role in the party's decision-making processes that it once did. The leading trade unions of the sixties and seventies—the engineering (machinists) union, the mineworkers, the iron and steel trades, the railway workers—were bound to be eclipsed. Trade unionism as a whole adopts a lower profile in New Labor, and the most visible trade unionists are to be found in different sectors, including a consolidated public-employee union (Unison), telecommunications (CWU), and technical and managerial staffs (MSF). Following the example of many of its continental European counterparts, Labor has fashioned itself as a people's party rather than a workers' party. It has abandoned its hammer-and-sickle-style emblem in favor of the red rose; it relies more on the mass media and less on its own "movement" organs of propaganda; it has reduced the weight of the unions (and especially of the union leadership) in the election of its leaders and determination of policy.

In policy matters, Labor has also gone with the tide in downplaying economic dirigism. It does not plan to renationalize any of the privatized investments (although it will reverse halfway-realized plans to privatize the railways and the post office). It has moved far, far away from the Alternative Economic Strategy that its then-dominant left wing was advocating in the early years of Thatcherism: a kind of siege economy with high tariffs and state investment in heavy industry. Labor has come to accept the internationalization of the economy that gives the bond markets such huge power. Sometimes it appears that Labor has abandoned all hope of managing the economy, and has focused instead on quality-of-life issues that directly affect the insecure middle third: health, education, crime, drugs, "the community" (one buzzword that Blair has certainly bagged from the Yanks).

Most notoriously, Blair has combined the people's party image with policy backpedaling in his redraft of Clause 4 —actually sub-section 4 of Clause 4—of the party's constitution. Succeeding where previous revisionists had failed, he is ditching the old Clause 4—the Fabian Sidney Webb's technocratic version of the Marxist creed, long considered the party's "Old Testament" by its socialist faithful—in favor of a less workerist and less economistic (though wordier) alternative. The new wording explicitly accepts the dynamism of the market economy, while hedging it about with guarantees of mutuality, fairness, and democratic control. It also aims to implant at the core of "New

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Labor's" creed a wider set of values than the old Clause 4 allowed, taking in racial and gender equality, democratic rights, consumerism, internationalism, environmentalism, and family concerns.

So is Blair simply taking New Labor down the New Democrat road? Yes and no. Yes, in all of the above ways. But no, because Britain is not America. Labor is becoming a people's party, run by professional politicians through the mass media, abdicating responsibility for economic policy and distancing itself from the Old Left social constituencies, but this does not make it Clinton's Democratic party, nor in all respects more "centrist" than before.

Take the changes in party structure and culture, for instance. The reduction of union power in the party has transfered power from union leaders to ordinary union and party members, who now vote annually in the election of the party's ruling National Executive Committee and whose democratic ballots also elected Tony Blair as party leader. Party membership has started to rise for the first time in a generation. If the party has a more faceless and classless complexion, that is partly because it reflects more faithfully its supporters' complexion. Far from weakening the party and giving the media greater power, these democratic reforms may have saved the Labor party from extinction.

If Labor has given up much of its traditional economic policy, this does not mean it has abdicated in favor of the free market, either. Like other social democratic parties, it has turned increasingly to the European Union (EU) as the level on which economic interventionism must now take place. Its growing Europeanism reflects the line of thinking followed, for example, by the Danish Social Democratic party, which discovered that it was unable to run an autonomous economic policy when in power and has now successfully carried Denmark into the EU. Labor's proposal to bring Britain under the Social Protocol of the Maastricht Treaty would give workers rights in corporate governance, equality of opportunity and workplace health and safety that they have never had before (including under "Old Labor" governments). A future Labor government might also bring the pound into the Deutsche mark-based European currency now under preparation. Although this would subject British fiscal policy to the supervision of unelected bureaucrats and bankers in Brussels and Berlin, it would probably also give elected politicians on the European level more power over money than elected politicians currently have in Britain.

In the meantime, Labor is free to focus its ideological appeal on defense of the welfare state. The very fact that its appeal to the insecure middle class is so firmly based on the welfare state should remind us how different Britain is from America. The upwardly mobile in Britain (the "aspirational" classes they are called here) retain many of the values of the working class they have left behind. In the eighties some of them voted Conservative in protest against Labor's workerist and high-tax image. But in the nineties many more of them are protesting not against taxes and the welfare state, but against the costs of a free-market life-style, what has been called "middle-class taxation"—that is, private school fees, health insurance, private pensions, and high mortgage payments. They also tend to blame excessive free-market individualism, not government, for signs of "social breakdown": drugs, crime, racial antagonism; even political corruption is seen as stemming from Thatcherite materialism rather than intrinsic to "big government."

It is therefore easier for Labor than it was for the Democrats, not only to recast its image as a "people's party," but also to forge policies that tie together the interests of the bottom two-thirds of society. A measure of redistribution that would pump life back into the National Health Service and state education is the single most desired policy in all of the opinion polls. "Communitarianism" is in vogue here, but the "community" yearned for is not the Stepford Wives suburb—all white, all professional, 1950s stereotypes intact—but something like a yuppie version of the mythical working-class neighborhood, where everyone looks out for one another, crime and truancy are unknown, and everyone is treated equally. It's a community defined by inclusion more than exclusion, and one in which government plays a larger rather than a smaller role. Labor owes its huge lead in the polls to these, values that do appeal across a wide swath of the electorate.

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Of course, it's easy enough to talk about "community." The hard part comes in defining what you mean by it, devising policies that will defend it, and finding the money to pay for those policies. It is a fair bet that a Blair government will remain substantially to the left of Clinton and won't be sandbagged so quickly by a fundamentally conservative electorate. But will Blair be any more successful than Clinton in developing a program and in vindicating government's claim to strengthen communities and the economy? On this point, betting people would be well advised to withhold their money a while yet.

For one thing, it's not entirely clear that Blair believes his own rhetoric. His rise has been so meteoric, his track record so scanty, that voters and party members alike are uncertain about whether Blair is a vigorous young reformer or just another anonymous professional politician in a telegenic suit. His entourage give mixed messages; economic spokesman Gordon Brown is even blander and slicker, while foreign affairs spokesman Robin Cook and deputy leader Prescott provide some humanity and left cover. The party's Borrie Commission on Social Justice has produced lots of good ideas for regenerating the welfare state, but the best of them cost a lot of money, and will Blair run that risk? Blair will have a lot more accumulated electoral goodwill than Clinton did, but he may prefer to husband it with inactivity than to spend it in the dubious hope of long-term benefits.

More worrying is Labor's continuing vulnerability to economic downturn. Left-wing victories almost always lead to runs on the bank. Labor will not try to face this out alone, but will have to turn more boldly to Europe. How will the British electorate take to European federalism, with its consequent loss not only of economic sovereignty but also of the symbol and substance of democracy? It is likely that a defeated Conservative party will dump John Major and take as its leader someone like Michael Portillo, another media-friendly forty-something, but also overtly hostile to Europe and willing to bang at least softly some nationalistic drums. Labor *might* be able to reassure the jittery middle, essay some modest reconstruction of public services, and keep the economy on an even keel—but can it do these things if besieged simultaneously by bond traders and flag wavers? If not, then the convergence thesis may be back in fashion, with Rush Limbaugh popping up on the BBC and Michael Portillo offering a "Contract with Britain." □

To Our Contributors

A few suggestions:

(1) Be sure to keep a copy of your manuscript. And please remember that we can't return articles unless they're accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

(2) Please don't write to ask whether we're interested in such and such an article—it makes for useless correspondence. Look at our last few issues to see if your idea fits in. Or take a chance and send us your article. We will not consider manuscripts submitted simultaneously to several publications.

(3) Type your ms *double-spaced*, with *wide* margins. Check all your figures, dates, names, etc.—they're the author's responsibility. No dot matrix submissions, *please*. Use WordPerfect 5.1 if possible, and send us the disk. Please use inclusive language so that we don't have to make adjustments during editing.

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(5) We're usually quick in giving editorial decisions. If there's a delay, it's because a few editors are reading your article.

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THE EDITORS □

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Robert V. Daniels

RUSSIA'S ROAD TO OZ: UTOPIAN REFORM VS. MODERN REALITY

The profession that used to be known as sovietology has been torn apart by debates over who failed to predict the collapse of communism, and why. But a greater failure of prediction, by any lights, was Russia's slide into chaos, crime, and corruption under its postcommunist leadership. This misunderstanding stems from the same fallacious assumptions that have been steering Russia's reform efforts into that morass ever since the breakup of the USSR and the advent of Boris Yeltsin's leadership.

Reform in Russia has been inspired less by practical considerations than by ideology. This is true both as a reaction against whatever the Soviet regime professed to stand for, and in attempting to implement an idealized free-market image of Western society. However, the free-market model, the "false consciousness" of capitalism, is not adequate to describe Western reality, let alone guide a society emerging from the straitjacket of the communist past. This contradiction between the theory that has inspired reform and the actual nature of modern society—particularly the peculiar kind of modern society that was the Soviet system—lies at the root of Russia's troubles of the 1990's.

Mesmerized by a utopian vision of capitalist society, Russia's reformers have shrugged off the country's past accomplishments, spotty as these may have been, in such key elements of modernization as industrialization, education, and technology. They have overlooked the parallel evolution—some have said "convergence"—of both communist and Western societies toward bureaucratic organization and concentrated economic power. They have plunged into disruptive institutional rearrangements without first addressing the need for the legal, financial, and policy infrastructure that underlies the Western economy, not to mention the decades of struggle in the West to remedy the failings and injustices of capitalism. They have perpetrated deep and damaging contradictions among the various elements of their attempted reforms. They have inadvertently degraded their own societies by facilitating crime, corruption, extremes of speculative wealth and mass impoverishment, and accelerated environmental deterioration, with consequences that may take decades to rectify. They are wasting the unique opportunity that their escape from totalitarianism has afforded them, to fashion social systems combining freedom, justice, and material progress.

This article is based on a paper presented at the international congress, "1985-1995: Perestroika in Search of a New World Balance," held in Genoa in March of this year.

The Utopian Program in Russia

How did reform in Russia and Eastern Europe come to be guided by a utopian plan that had little reference to Western reality and none to the Soviet past? What led the radical reformers to embrace a new false certainty when they had barely escaped from the false consciousness of Marxism-Leninism? The reasons are more emotional than logical.

Reform in Russia has been called a "revolution," both by Gorbachev and by his successors. This is an exaggeration; the reform era was not so much a new revolution as it was the closing phase of the original one that began in 1917, a phase that I term the "moderate revolutionary revival." After a long postrevolutionary dictatorship, the country was returning to the democratic, constitu-

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tional hopes of 1905 and 1917, before violence and extremism overwhelmed the moderate reformers. Yet there was no consensus in Russia about this reversion to old reference points. Gorbachev wanted to preserve the "socialist choice" of 1917-18, while Yeltsin repudiated everything smacking of the communist era and harked back to the semi-authoritarian structure of czarism between 1905 and 1917 (illustrated by his preference for the "Duma" rather than the "soviets," for example).

In undertaking to dismantle the totalitarian system, Gorbachev worked his way back through Soviet history to attack the military-style planned economy and the "command-administrative system" in the name of the New Economic Plan (NEP) model of market socialism. He gingerly relaxed state controls over those sectors—retail trade, services, agriculture—where nationalization and command methods had been most inappropriate to begin with. However, under contemporary Soviet conditions of centralism and super-industrialism these reforms were far more difficult to accomplish than in the 1920s without risking deep economic disruption. As everyone in Russia was soon saying, perestroika broke up the old economic guidance mechanism without putting anything in its place. The fundamental fallacy was to suppose that the market could be invoked out of nothing as an instrument for the transition to the market itself.

Nevertheless, in 1989 and 1990, under the influence of Western ideology and the communist collapse in Eastern Europe, Soviet economic thinking underwent a paradigm shift. The pursuit of market socialism, barely underway, was supplanted by the conviction that only a purely private, capitalist market economy could rescue the Soviet Union from its economic difficulties. This was the presumption underlying the "Five Hundred Days" plan of 1990. As one rereads this proposal, one is struck by its ambition to combine emergency economic stabilization with radical change: "The program sets the task of taking everything possible away from the state and giving it to the people.... The right to property is realized through destatization and privatization, through the transfer of state property to citizens." As an attempt to reconstruct the Soviet economy overnight in line with an abstract theory, the Five Hundred Days Plan was a manifesto of Bolshevism in reverse.

As Russia entered the Yeltsin phase of reform, it was driven all the more by ideology, both the negative reaction against anything associated with the Stalinist model, including socialism and planning, and the positive attraction of Western free-market capitalism. But the reformers failed to grasp that these ideologies neither described nor guided their respective systems, serving rather to obfuscate and legitimize them. In fact, Yeltsin's people were more genuinely devoted to their ideology than their communist predecessors had ever been, except for the "heroic" period of the early Soviet years. Rejecting everything that happened since 1917 as a historical wrong turn, the Yeltsinites remind one of the anarchists of 1917-18 who wanted to tear up the tainted czarist railroad tracks and start over again. Railing against a demonized image of the Soviet regime on the basis of an idealized image of the West, the reformers have thrown away the tools of planning and control that might have helped them deal with the problems they inherited from the past.

The troubles of perestroika under Gorbachev were serious enough, but minor compared with the crisis brought on by the Yeltsin phase of reform. Here political events and the interaction of personalities became crucial, a point neglected by theories of an inevitable postcommunist transition. Yeltsin was clearly driven to settle scores with Gorbachev after their falling out in 1987. Taking advantage of Gorbachev's steps toward democratization in 1989-90, he put himself at the head of the radical democratic movement, won the leadership of the Russian Republic, and embraced those policies that were most calculated to embarrass and discredit his rival, specifically the radical free-market alternative in economics and self-determination in nationality relations.

Everyone recalls well how Yeltsin pushed Gorbachev aside after the August Putsch of 1991, but it is not so well understood that the policies he had become committed to were adopted opportunistically, in order to outmaneuver the Union president. Accordingly he liquidated the USSR, and proceeded to implement the radical economic theory, without any empirical calculation as to its applicability or its impact.

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Far from being a natural process of "transition" as it has been so widely represented, the Yeltsinite project of re-creating capitalism was entirely without historical precedent. It was a deliberate attempt, by state command, to unscramble eggs, ignoring both the modern limitations of the market system and Russia's unreadiness for it. Yet the West connived in Yeltsin's pursuit of the free-market chimera, offering promises of aid and investment in return for radical reforms that would open up Russian markets and investment opportunities to Western capital.

Yeltsin's radical approach had precedents in the Russian intellectual tradition. It was a new manifestation of the old habit of political utopianism, the temptation to embrace ideal solutions without regard to the practical consequences. The program advanced by Yeltsin's deputy Yegor Gaidar was a form of super-Westernism, distrusting everything Russian and naively adopting the foreign model—even if it had to be imposed by old Russian command methods. However, like past Russian reforms copied from the West, the Yeltsin-Gaidar program rested on a serious misunderstanding of the Western context. Capitalism in the West was built over the course of centuries by capitalists pursuing their own profit; in Russia the reformers aimed to recreate capitalism overnight by an act of state policy, while they overlooked the century and a half of efforts in the West to address the defects and injustices of capitalism.

In their new attachment to the free-market ideal, the Russian reformers succumbed to the basic fallacy in Anglo-American economics, inherited from Adam Smith, that the pursuit of individual advantages necessarily yields in the aggregate the maximum community advantage. This error led them to minimize the role of the state in expressing a democratically derived common interest and taking care of those "externalities" such as health, safety and environmental quality that are beyond the scope of the individual enterprise. Idealizing the capitalist market, the reformers overlooked both its short-term and long-term weaknesses—cyclical instability and structural unemployment on the one hand, corporate concentration and market manipulation on the other—problems that require continuous state intervention and management in order to make the market function as it is supposed to.

Today's utopians have unwittingly subscribed to Lenin's uncompromising formulation: between capitalism and socialism "there is no third way." They assert, "You cannot jump over a chasm in two leaps," an argument that illustrates what Alfred North Whitehead called "the fallacy of misplaced concreteness," that is, describing a complex social situation with a physical metaphor, and then deducing answers from the physical properties of the metaphor.

The practical question is not which ideal system to choose and how to jump there, but how and how much the existing social system should be modified and what the side effects might be. In real life there are innumerable policy positions between Smithian laissez-faire capitalism and Stalinist barracks socialism. The challenge is to work out the best intermediate position for a particular country. Russia's circumstances, above all the challenge of escaping the burden of the Soviet past, do not necessarily call for the same policies that Western countries follow, let alone what Western ideology prescribes.

Defenders of the free-market project commonly assert that democratic government must rest on the market and private property, and that the capitalist economy assures democracy. It follows that to consolidate democracy in the former communist countries, the socialist economy had to be broken up and converted to capitalism as rapidly as possible, to create a new middle class and make the reforms irreversible. But the premise is historically questionable, let alone the conclusion. Max Weber, so fashionable today, actually wrote, "It is ridiculous in the extreme to ascribe to modern high capitalism, as currently being imported into Russia [this in 1906]... an inner affinity with 'democracy' or even 'freedom.'" True, early capitalism, small-scale and individualist, was associated with the rise of liberal government in Britain and America and with the principles of the French Revolution. In most of Europe, however, democratization of the political process proceeded only with the rise of the working class and the critics of capitalism. In more recent history, there are ample instances, from Mussolini's Italy to Pinochet's Chile, where capitalism not only did not prevent the overthrow of democracy but connived in it. Some measure of market freedom may be a necessary condition of democracy, but it is not a suf-

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ficient one. The real question, for the West as for the ex-communists, is how to adapt democracy to the realities of a society based on large organizations, by democratizing bureaucratic structures rather than trying to break them up (as in Russia and in the public sector in the West) or ignoring their implications (as in the private sector in the West).

The Consequences of Utopianism

Like the other ex-communist countries, Russia has been guided since 1991 by a combination of fallacies. They include the simplistic perception of a Western model that never (or hardly ever) existed; systematic denigration of the public powers and national resources inherited from the Soviet regime; and the urge to extirpate the past in the name of a myth. These errors have torn the country apart economically as well as politically, creating a situation distinctly more serious than Brezhnev's era of stagnation despite superficial appearances of Western-style glitz in the major cities. Retrogression is disguised as progress. When and in what form the country may regain a measure of stability and decent living conditions for the mass of the population remains to be seen.

The Gorbachev reforms are widely faulted, but for contradictory reasons: they went too far too fast, or they did not go far enough fast enough. Gorbachev's regime certainly made economic mistakes—wage increases without productivity increases, generating "inflationary overhang"; naively trusting managers who had no sensitivity to market stimuli; and premature dismantling of the planning and controls that might have guided more constructive reform, including conversion of the military-industrial complex. Russia would have done better following the Chinese path of market reform at the bottom while retaining planning at the top. However, reform in the Yeltsin phase, inspired by utopian ideology, has proved to be far more disruptive and confrontational.

With the decree powers voted to it by the Russian Parliament in November 1991, the Yeltsin government undertook radical economic reconstruction along three principal lines—market liberalization, macro-economic stabilization, and privatization. Marketization, on the NEP model, had already been carried to an excess in the Gorbachev era in the application of the profit-and-loss principle to inappropriate areas, even to cultural and scientific institutions. But the critical step was the decision by the Yeltsin government in January 1992 to free most prices and loosen foreign exchange controls. A surge in prices was the inevitable result, launching one of history's classic inflations, evoking an orgy of speculation and white-collar crime, and economically devastating a large part of the Russian population. Prices rose so fast that they failed to stimulate domestic production and investment, while foreign imports undercut existing employment in consumer goods. Nevertheless, the Yeltsin government has continued to put marketization at the forefront of its program, even though the resulting chaos and criminality have more than offset any benefits that the free market might have offered in the encouragement of initiative and efficiency. In his new book, *Lost Opportunity: Why Economic Reforms in Russia Have Not Worked*, Marshall Goldman writes, "These leaders all seem to have forgotten that, as a minimum, a successful reform must make the life of the average consumer better."

Macro-economic stabilization, in other words the shock therapy of restricting the money supply to fight inflation, has not merely failed in Russia—it has never been systematically applied, and for good reason. Shock therapy is a paradoxical treatment, aiming to cure an ailing economy by making it sicker. It proposes to liquidate "inefficient" firms through credit starvation and bankruptcy, but a whole country cannot go into bankruptcy and liquidate itself. Although the shock prescription is orthodox Western medicine for the third world, no developed country has voluntarily submitted to it.

Though shock therapy was dear to the hearts of Russia's new Western advisers, it was not really called for until the 1992 price reforms unleashed the inflationary storm. But from this point on, parliamentary resistence to Yeltsin, and the general fear of unemployment and a "social explosion," stymied the serious imposition of monetary restraints. The government deficit was financed not by borrowing but by unrestricted currency emission—just printing the money—while tax revenue remained in limbo between impossible

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demands and problematical collection. The inflationary surge has continued right down to the present, with all its deleterious consequences for public morale and the productive economy. Confounding the utopians, their goal of market liberalization hopelessly undercut their parallel goal of financial stabilization.

Privatization, the third component of reform, has achieved a mixed record. The Gorbachev regime, wedded to the "socialist choice," moved slowly here, acting mainly to ease restraints on new, small-scale private enterprise. By contrast, the Yeltsin regime abandoned the distinction between new enterprise and existing large-scale entities. It made the conversion of state property into private enterprises an ideological imperative, carried to extremes (airports and museums, for instance) undreamed of in the West. The reformers never realistically addressed the problems of what a state-initiated system of private ownership would ultimately look like, how they would deal with existing monopolies and conglomerates, who would take title to state property, and how it would be paid for, if at all.

Privatization has naturally proceeded furthest and most successfully in the sectors of small enterprise, housing, and direct consumer services where, as I have noted, nationalization was least appropriate to begin with. In agriculture, the campaign to break up the collectives has achieved only a modest degree of individual farming, at the price of much disruption and declining output; turning the kolkhozy into genuine cooperatives supporting expanded private plots would have made much more sense. Meanwhile, contemporary capitalism in the West is rapidly socializing formerly independent business activity.

As to large-scale enterprise in Russia, the only way to privatize it was to give it away. The voucher method of distributing shares to employees and to the public seemed most democratic and politically palatable, though it highlighted the contradiction between the utopian eighteenth-century ideal of a democracy of smallholders and the twentieth-century reality of large authoritarian organizations. Inevitably, a large proportion of the vouchers issued to the public ended up in the hands of speculators. Employee shares, by contrast, harked back to old syndicalist ideas of workers' control, not heard since the Workers' Opposition of 1920-21. Finally, large blocks of shares were left in the hands of the state, causing Russia's supposedly private economy to look more like the French or Italian economic structures than the German or American. In the last analysis, by most accounts, the chief gainers in privatization have been the old managers and officials, the nomenklatura, taking over as private fiefdoms the entities that they formery directed as state bureaucrats. Marshall Goldman calls it "grabitization."

Though the reforms of marketization, stabilization, and privatization have been justified as the answer both to pre-Gorbachevian stagnation and to Gorbachevian confusion, their effect on Russian economic performance has been little short of disastrous, recorded economic activity falling by 1993 to perhaps one-half of the level of the 1980.* Reform advocates blame this collapse on the failings of the pre-reform system, just as the communists habitually blamed "survivals of capitalism" for their troubles. Russia, it is suggested, had to go through the phase of "Wild West capitalism"—though this formula ignored Russia's accomplishment of primary capital accumulation under pre-communist as well as communist auspices. Yegor Gaidar went further, to suggest that economic disruption was the necessary price for quickly exploiting the window of opportunity to extirpate the nomenklatura as a ruling class and make the reforms irreversible. This was precisely the logic, in reverse, of the Bolshevik radicals like Nikolai Bukharin who attempted to justify the economic disaster of War Communism between 1918 and 1921.

The ultimate irony of utopian reform, trying to implement an unreal image of the first world, has been to turn Russia into a third world country, the opposite of what the theorists of transformation expected. This means speculative capitalism, grafted onto an impoverished society to extract natural resources and exploit cheap labor, a kind of economy marked by colossal theft, speculation, and luxury imports. Alexander Solzhenitsin describes it as "fraught with unproductive, savage, and repulsive forms of behavior, the plunder of

*To some extent this collapse was offset by the upsurge in private and illegal activity that never came to the attention of the statisticians and the tax collectors. Post-Soviet figures may understate economic performance as much as Soviet figures exaggerated it.

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the nation's wealth, the likes of which the West has not known." With widening inequality and endemic corruption, Russia is headed for the model not of Germany but of Brazil, or perhaps of a low-level Arab sheikdom where most of the population lives on handouts financed by the export of natural resources.

Kto vinovat? Chto delat?

Who is to blame? What is to be done? These are Russians' eternal questions about their destiny, today as much as in the past.

The blame for Russia's current distress lies first of all with the utopian image of the free-market economy touted by the Western theorists. Second, there is the traditional Russian penchant for extreme and simplistic solutions. Third, there is the equally ideological rejection of everything associated with the Soviet past. On top of all this came the divisive leadership politics of the post-totalitarian succession—first, Gorbachev's quest for an alternative to the communist bureaucracy, and then Yeltsin's embrace of the radical free-market program in order to mark himself off from Gorbachev. Western advice and promises of aid only confirmed the Yeltsin regime in its radical commitments.

In a population without much internalized self-discipline and a tendency to see the market as an opportunity for speculation rather than production, the sudden removal of economic controls allowed a catastrophic lapse into crime and corruption. The "social safety net" and the "social market" are more fiction than fact. The democratic enthusiasm of 1991 is gone, replaced by cynicism and apathy. The Brezhnev era begins to look good in contrast.

Free-market reform has not strengthened democracy in Russia. On the contrary, by stimulating political reactions against the Yeltsin regime, it has provoked the latter into more and more authoritarian methods of rule. Russia is experiencing a sort of Pinochet scenario, by degrees, as it moves backward politically toward dictatorship in order to support the ideological commitment to capitalism.

To find a way out of its current crisis Russia needs to de-ideologize its thinking and analyze its problems and resources without illusion, whether Westernist or nativist. It has to confront its limitations in experience and cultural background, and the ghastly lapse into anarchy and criminality that utopian reform efforts have allowed. Clearing away the damage done by ideological mythology would require, among other things, that the government stop artificial privatization of existing state entities; reassert control over foreign trade and the revenue from the export of natural resources; restore economic planning in its indirect form and accelerate conversion in the military-industrial complex, rather than contemplate bankruptcies and unemployment (or arms sales abroad); temporarily re-control basic prices; protect industry and agriculture from foreign competition in order to revive domestic production and employment; recognize regional interdependence among the former Soviet republics without imposing coercive unity on the one hand or abetting particularistic impoverishment on the other. All these steps, unfortunately, defy the model of free-market reform demanded by Western governments and financial institutions as the price of aid and credits. Nevertheless, Russia needs to define its own destiny and not let it be imposed by outside ideologists.

A remedy for Russia that combines democratic values with recognition of modern social realities points logically to some form of compromise solution, including the politics of federalism and a mixed economy. In essence this means the direction that perestroika was moving in up to 1990, before opposition on the left and on the right disrupted its progress. Whether the necessary political forces could be mustered in the near term to support such an approach remains to be seen, but it would clearly be more compatible with Russian democracy than the obsession with unfettered capitalism that has dominated Russian reform since perestroika was abandoned. Still, it will take a long time to undo the political as well as economic damage inflicted on Russia by the Yeltsin regime just as the country was coming out of the long shadow of totalitarianism. □

IN MEMORIAM

We mourn the death of our friend and comrade, a former editor of *Dissent*, George Eckstein. We will publish a remembrance in the Fall issue.

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André Liebich

NATIONS, STATES, MINORITIES: WHY IS EASTERN EUROPE DIFFERENT?

The very respectable journal *Le Monde Diplomatique* recently published an ethnic map of Europe. It portrays the western part of the continent in solid colors coinciding perfectly with state boundaries. The eastern part, however, is a crazy quilt of overlapping borders, with the colors running into each other within individual states.

Of coarse, the solidity of the West European ethnic map is an illusion. Who has not heard of Catalans and Bretons, Scots and Welsh, Walloons and Flemings, perhaps even Frisians or Friulians? Has anyone forgotten that Ulstermen, Basques, and Corsicans were practicing ethnic violence before it erupted in East Europe? And how can Switzerland, that archetypal multilinguistic state, possibly be depicted in monochrome?

And yet this map does convey a fundamental fact. The nature of ethnicity *is* different in Eastern and Western Europe. East European politicians may try to convince us that ethnic problems in the East are a legacy of communism. In fact, ethnic violence both preceded and survived the communist regimes. Communism bears the responsibility for having fostered a type of politics that thrives on ethnic tension, but its part in creating ethnic tensions was very modest.

How, then, is one to account for the differences between Western and Eastern Europe with regard to ethnicity, nationalism, and minorities? The answer may be sought in the following hypotheses. First, the relationship between state and society, especially national society, has been different in the East than in the West. Second, the character of urbanization has been different in each part of the continent. Third, and however paradoxical it may sound, Eastern Europe is characterized by weak and ambivalent ethnic identities in comparison to those encountered in the West.

The basic difference in the state/society relationship between East and West revolves around what economists would call a matter of sequencing. As modern national societies began to emerge at the turn of the nineteenth century, under the impact of Romanticism, industrialization and the French revolution, West European state structures were already firmly in place. In contrast, Eastern Europe did not possess a single indigenous state. Thus, nation followed state in the West but preceded it in the East.

In Western Europe, well-established bureaucratic, military, legal, and monarchic structures molded national society to the shape of the state. Nationalism, far from disrupting the process of state-building, reinforced it as states continued, under the nationalist banner, the homogenizing tasks that they had embarked upon centuries earlier. Some states, notably France and Great Britain, proved more successful in these tasks than others, such as Spain. Some states, the Netherlands or Sweden for example, also succeeded spectacularly, but only after having dropped the ballast of unwieldy provinces, such as Flanders and Wallonia, Finland and Norway.

Even those parts of Western Europe that attained unification late, notably Germany and Italy, enjoyed an uninterrupted state tradition. The Roman empire may have been a distant memory and the Holy Roman empire may have lost its vitality long before it was pronounced dead, but the imperial myth survived, and its universalism complemented the miniature state structures of German and Italian principalities. Too weak to become modern national units, these political entities nonetheless served as the building blocks of the new states.

What a contrast with Eastern Europe! At the turn of the nineteenth century this part of the con-

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tinent was divided among three empires, none of which was nationally based or locally governed. Neither Hapsburg dynastic principle nor Ottoman religious categories nor czarist autocracy offered an ideological basis for a national state. Neither Vienna nor Constantinople nor St. Petersburg tolerated manifestations of statehood within their realms. The slow, painful, and belated emergence of states in Eastern Europe between 1800 and 1918 took place not through the combination of local territorial political units as in the West but through fragmentation of these huge ill-defined foreign entities. Nationalism in the West was a centripetal force, whereas in the East it was necessarily a centrifugal one and it continues to be so.

The emergence of modern East European states was complicated by further factors. First, whereas some new states were wholly modern creations, others were founded upon a tradition of once strong but brutally interrupted statehood. This was the case for Poland, Hungary, and Bohemia, which at one time seemed prime candidates for a West European type of development but instead fell under the sway of foreign powers and disappeared from the political map. When they reacquired sovereignty in 1918 they had the greatest difficulty in reconciling their earlier conception of nationhood—a medieval class conception or, in the case of Bohemia, a territorial notion—with their new incarnation as supposedly ethnically based nation states.

Another factor complicating the emergence of national states in East Europe was the different expectations created by contrasting imperial regimes. This is particularly evident in the case of Yugoslavia, which is heir to both the Austro-Hungarian and the Ottoman empires. One finds the remains of Ottoman categorization according to *millet* or self-governing religious community in the distinction among Bosnians, Croats, and Serbs, which sacrifices linguistic nuances to religious differences. As Bosnia has discovered to its woe, however, the *millet* system rested upon separation of religious communities and the presence of an imperial power. Similarly, the former Hungarian crownland of Croatia appears to have entered the Yugoslav kingdom (and later federation) in the expectation that it was joining a new Austria-Hungry where it would play the role of Hungary in exercising absolute dominion over its own territory and co-dominion over the country as a whole. Indeed, Croatia has even adopted the late-nineteenth century Hungarian notion of nationhood. Just as anyone who then lived on Hungarian territory was declared to be Hungarian, present-day Croatia would consider all its inhabitants as Croats. Serbs, in contrast, continuing a *reconquista* tradition of liberation from alien yoke, are less interested in making all inhabitants of Serbia Serbs than in ensuring that all Serbs find themselves within a Serbian state.

In all cases, the discontinuities of state development in Eastern Europe, provoked by foreign invasion, dynastic usurpation, and imperial domination, have led to what the Hungarian thinker Istvan Bibo called "a pathological absence of continuity in territorial status" and, one might add, in linguistic boundaries as well. Whereas the basic lines of the Carolingian partition have remained stable in the West, the borders even of ancient states such as Hungary and Poland have veered madly, as if drawn by drunk cartographers, and other entities, such as Bulgaria and Serbia, have undergone total displacement. Whereas the Romance-Germanic linguistic boundary has remained stable for centuries, even in the face of political changes, linguistic boundaries in the East have been chronically unstable. It is as if every possible factor had militated against the coincidence of East and West European development, making the division of the last fifty years not an exception but the repetition of a rule.

Today, in popular parlance the terms "state" and "nation" are so closely identified that they are often used interchangeably (the border guard's question, "What's your nationality?" actually means, "What's your state citizenship?"). However, only in those states that preceded nations do the terms coincide, and therefore the order in which the nation and the state appear is not a matter of indifference. One might add that the East European flaunting of the accoutrements of statehood—crests, banners, state titles, military pomp—only confirms this proposition. Those countries that have acquired statehood late revel in it even though the state they have has come too late to fit the nation for which it was intended.

The differences in the historical relationship

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between the state and national society in East and West Europe are closely tied to another fundamental difference between the two parts of the continent. This concerns the role of cities in the process of nation-building. Urbanization and the development of a city-dwelling (bourgeois) class have been powerful ingredients in the crystallization of national consciousness in Western Europe. The East European experience has been diametrically opposite. Here, urbanization has been the prime obstacle to national consciousness and nationalism has developed outside and against the city rather than within it.

The ethnic separation of town and countryside has been one of Eastern Europe's predominant characteristics. This is the case both in the northern and in the southern tier of the area, although for different reasons. In Poland, Bohemia, and Hungary medieval rulers encouraged the immigration of qualified artisans, largely from Germany, as well as of German, Jewish, and Armenian traders. In Ottoman-conquered Balkan Europe, the urban-oriented Muslim administrators settled in the cities and were joined by Muslim (and occasionally Greek or Armenian) merchants. The qualitatively different nature of urban life was reinforced by separate legal codes. These legal differences, as much as the fact that the cities spoke different languages from the countryside, created an urban culture independent of its territorial context.

The overwhelmingly nonindigenous character of the East European city persisted well into the present era. It has not been much more than a century that Budapest, Bratislava, or Prague has been predominantly Hungarian, Slovak, or Czech (in 1910 only 18 percent of Bratislava's population was Slovak). Moreover, the appropriation of the city (including the capital city) by the majority nation of the surrounding countryside has rarely been an entirely natural phenomenon. Holocaust and expulsion have been the ultimate agents in this process, aided by discriminatory practices involving urban residence permits and labor recruitment. In most East European cities architectural and cultural reminders of previous dwellers stare down upon the present inhabitants, reminding them both of their lack of roots in the city and of their dubious title to their new urban environment.

No wonder that no East European city has ever became the stable focus of national loyalty in the modern period. Poland switched its capital from Cracow to Warsaw at the turn of the seventeenth century and Hungary was in no hurry to move its capital back to Budapest from Bratislava at the end of the eighteenth. For Czech patriots Prague was a German-speaking fortress to be conquered rather than the cradle of the nation; no Serb ever wept for Belgrade as he or she did for the burial ground of the Serb people on the empty Field of Blackbirds in Kosovo. If the city (*civitas*) is the inspiration for citizenship, it is not surprising that this concept and this quality should be so unfamiliar in Eastern Europe.

The nonurban and even anti-urban character of East European nationalism has radically influenced the class structure of East European society. Not only did the separation of town and country divide social development to the detriment of national unity but it created what the Czech sociologist Miroslav Hroch calls "incomplete" nations, lacking both civic values and a bourgeois class. The role of the bourgeoisie as agent of nation-building was taken up by the clergy (throughout most of the Balkans) or by the gentry (in Poland and Hungary). These agents imparted their own value systems to the national idea. They spun myths of messianic grace, nomadic chivalry, or rural purity to found their quest for national identity. Thus, while the West European bourgeoisie was shifting its allegiance from a concrete city to a concrete national state, East European elites were cultivating loyalty to nostalgia or fantasy.

The absence of a bourgeoisie will have obvious implications for capital formation and for the long-run development of a free-market economy in Eastern Europe. The essential foreignness of the city to the majority nations of this area is brought home to us every evening on our television screens: the destruction of Dubrovnik was not only an attack on a Croat city (only recently Croat and not very Croat at that), it was an attack on the city as an alien abode. The siege of Sarajevo is not merely the pursuit of a strategic objective. It is the final stage in the conquest of the city by the countryside, the vengeance of those excluded from the city who can only come to terms with this foreign entity by destroying it.

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Bereft of the organizing principles of statehood, lacking an urban focus and deprived of territorial continuity, East European nations have come to consciousness in a structureless environment. Instead of the demarcation lines of Western Europe one encounters transitional "shatter zones" of acute diversity where linguistic and religious borders are blurred. The result is the weakening of personal identities and an ensuing need to fortify these identities without regard to the consequences. As Freud pointed out with reference to what he called "the narcissism of minor differences," the fact that differences are slight may exacerbate rather than attenuate conflict.

Given the conventional belief that East European nationality is founded on language, it is astounding to note the fluidity of the East European notion of language. Not only are scholars hard put to pin down the linguistic composition of a given region but languages spring up with bewildering ease. According to Karl Deutsch, Europe possessed sixteen standard languages in 1800, thirty in 1900, and fifty-three in 1937, and the number has continued to grow. Within the last half-century Eastern Europe has seen the emergence of a Macedonian and (temporarily?) of a Moldavian language. It has witnessed the rise and fall (and perhaps rise again) of Ruthenian as well as the near-demise of Kashubian. Within the last century it has lived through the unification of Serbian and Croatian around the Stokavski dialect at the expense of Cakavski (perhaps still used by some elders on the more remote Dalmatian islands) and Kajkavski only to see this process now being reversed by Croatian nationalists in favor of Kajkavski. It has seen the definitive separation of Czech from Slovak but the unification of Tosk and Gheg dialects across the Albanian-Kosovo border. The historian George Schöpflin has even noted an (unsuccessful) one-man attempt to hoist the Polish-Czech Teschen dialect to language status.

When even the language one speaks is uncertain, one's definition of oneself can hardly remain unaffected. A leading indication of uncertain identity is the glaring discrepancies in nationality statistics throughout Eastern Europe. These discrepancies are due in part to official manipulation but, above all, they express varying definitions of nationality. Warsaw and Bonn have different conceptions of what it is to be a German when one happens to live in Silesia just as Tirana and Athens have different notions of what it is to be a Greek in Northern/Southern Epirus. Some census respondents reply opportunistically, telling the census takers what they want to hear (but what does that say for their national consciousness?). Others, considered primitive but perhaps wiser than most, call themselves *tubylcy* or *hiesiger*, that is, "people from here." One could call oneself a "Yugoslav" in the old Yugoslavia if one really did not know how to define oneself as Serb, Croat, Slovene, and so on. Even a year after the demise of that state, 10 percent of the population of besieged Sarajevo were still identifying themselves as "Yugoslavs."

Other attributes of identity are also blurred in Eastern Europe, producing the most paradoxical situations: Communist Yugoslavia's establishment of "Muslim" as a national category was posited on the conviction that religious belief was of no consequence; the overwhelming majority of the insurrectionist Serbs of the Croatian Krajina do not use the cyrillic alphabet, even though the removal of cyrillic from public places is one of their grievances. The far-reaching implications of ambiguous identity are vividly underscored by the Macedonian example. No one can tell who is a Macedonian or where the borders of Macedonia lie, to the infinite distress of Greeks, Bulgarians, Serbs and Albanians, not to speak of Macedonians.

The uncertainty of identity has only increased in the communist and postcommunist eras. The communist industrialization of Eastern Europe produced first- and second-generation city dwellers, ill at ease in their urban environment but no longer at home in the village, self-conscious about speaking dialect but deficient in the literary tongue. Postcommunist upheaval has created material insecurity and an ideological void where every nation is faced with the temptation of turning itself into a political party. As the intelligentsias discuss marketization and democratization, the East European masses rally around those who replace socialist paternalism with nationalist paternalism and who provide national criteria for excluding competitors from scarce goods. In these circumstances, communist dichotomies pitting the exploiters against the exploited are easily translated into national terms, as is the search for the villains re-

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sponsible for one's present woes. This identification with one's kin group is passionate but it is not reassuring. How could it be otherwise when the differences separating oneself from one's enemies are so fragile, so contingent and so ill-understood?

At the beginning of the nineteenth century there were no indigenous states in Eastern Europe and, in a sense, the whole population consisted of national minorities. By 1919 the area possessed seven states (eleven if one adds Greece and the Baltics) and minorities made up about 25 percent of the population. Today, there are twelve (or sixteen) states, and minorities amount to no more than 10 percent of the population. But the problem of minorities remains intractable, regardless of the size of the minorities themselves. Eastern Europe is indeed different from Western Europe. We would do best to begin a search for a solution to the problems of Eastern Europe by understanding the specificity of the region. The only permanent solution to the crisis in Eastern Europe is one that accepts Eastern Europe on its own terms.

What does this imply in practical terms? Eastern Europeans themselves should be closely involved in discussion of international provisions for minority rights and minority protection. The most ambitious earlier effort to deal with these issues, the post-World War I minority treaties, was a failure because it was seen by the states concerned as a *diktat* and a hypocritical one at that. At that time, the great powers imposed rules of behavior on the East European states without much knowledge of their situation and with no consultation. Moreover, these same powers refused to be bound by any comparable provisions at home or in their own colonial empires. No wonder that East Europeans resented these treaties and repudiated them when they could.

Today, numerous international bodies are again concerned with formulating codes of conduct with regard to minorities. The UN Sub-Commission on Minorities, the Council of Europe, and the CSCE (now OSCE, the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe) have taken concrete measures. The European Union will also have to give attention to the issue as it considers enlargement toward the East. Although the East Europeans are members of these bodies (with the exception of the European Union) their voices are seldom listened to. They remain at the receiving end of these institutions' decisions, even in matters that concern them directly. To be sure, involving the East Europeans in such decision making will complicate matters. It will open the door to exploitation of the minority issue by individual countries against others; it will allow the East Europeans to raise, either opportunistically or in good faith, the problem of immigrants and other disadvantaged groups in Western Europe. At the very least, it will slow down adoption of agreements on minority issues. Once reached, however, such agreements are far more likely to be respected.

At the same time, the East European countries should be persuaded to conclude bilateral agreements guaranteeing conditions for fellow nationals in neighboring countries. Minorities are already *de facto* hostages in the international relations of the area. Formal bilateral agreements would not only protect minorities but would give contracting states a stake in respecting their commitments. Of course, such agreements would require the most irreconcilable parties to confront their disagreements head on. This article has suggested, however, that notwithstanding their obduracy and hostility the states of the area probably understand each other better than outsiders do.

Finally, Eastern Europe must grapple with the implications of the failure of federalism in the area. The three federal states (Yugoslavia, the USSR, and Czechoslovakia) have all disintegrated, leaving in their wake a strong suspicion among state elites (and possibly the hope among minorities) that federalism is a step toward separatism. It is useless to argue that these federal states were fundamentally vitiated by their long experience of communism or to invoke, as is often done, the Swiss counterexample, an ill-understood anachronistic anomaly. Federalism has suffered a severe setback in Eastern Europe and all efforts to protect minorities must take account of this fact. We need to recognize legitimate fears of secession and give support to non-territorial forms of autonomy. It is not possible to tell whether such measures and the passage of time will one day induce Eastern Europe to undertake federal experiments again. If they do, it is likely that these experiments will not be imitations of the West European experience but ones that in their originality will correspond to the uniqueness of the area. □

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Vladimir Tismaneanu

DEMOCRACY, ROMANIAN STYLE

When it comes to Romania, political squalor is taken for granted. But the transition to democracy didn't start out that way. In December 1989, Romania was the only Soviet bloc country where the revolution appeared to be both bloody and uncompromising. Bloody it was, with over one thousand people killed, and President Ceausescu and his wife executed after a parody of a trial. As for uncompromising, the consistency and authenticity of the revolution have been questioned by many Romanians, who are disgusted by the slow pace of reform and the return of Ceausescu's sycophants to power.

For five years, a profoundly demoralized population has watched the former communist bureaucracy enrich itself, backed by a presidential regime that, while pretending to be the continuation of the December "breakthrough," has cynically revived and used xenophobic nationalism to undermine its opponents and create a false sense of ethnic unity. In other word, ghosts of both fascist and Stalinist pasts have been summoned to strengthen a government still unable to perceive the opposition as a legitimate partner in the political process.

In late January 1995, for instance, President Ion Iliescu, who came to power in December 1989, was the recipent of the "Man of the Year" award offered by Adrian Paunescu. Paunescu, once Ceausescu's court poet, is currently a senator and vice chairman of the neocommunist Socialist Party of Labor (PSM) and also an adamant campaigner for the rehabilitation of the late dictator. Iliescu's acceptance of this award suggests how eerie the political landscape is, for chauvinistic extremists have entered the highest levels of government. The president, who fancies himself and his party as social democrats, has established a governing coalition with the country's most anti-Hungarian, anti-Semitic, and anti-liberal movements: the Romanian National Unity party (PUNR), the Romania Mare (Great Romania) party, and the PSM. In January, protocols for this "quadrangular" agreement were signed, though not a ripple of national or external indignation came in its wake.

Meanwhile, under the protection of the ruling party, former *Securitate* (secret police) thugs have converted into successful businessmen. Released from prison thanks to presidential pardons, several of Ceausescu's former Politburo members are now prospering in (often murky) financial enterprises. Former dissidents have almost disappeared from the public domain, nauseated by this brazen return of some of the most repellent characters of the previous regime. Still, many Romanians continue to voice strong criticisms of corruption, clientelism, the dismal economic situation, and the country's slide into authoritarianism.

American officials nowadays see Romania as a relatively stable entity in a world of shifting boundaries and ethnic turbulence. A campaign initiated by PUNR's nationalist extremists to prevent the appointment of the new U.S. ambassador, Alfred Moses, was even dismissed by a high U.S. government official as "a manipulation by some emigré Romanians in the U.S." It is hard to concur with the official American optimism: efforts—sanctioned by Bucharest's government—to rehabilitate Marshal Ion Antonescu (Romania's pro-Nazi wartime leader who was executed in 1946) have continued unabated, in spite of U.S. congressional protests. As Ambassador Moses puts it, erecting statues to this loyal ally of Hitler is equivalent to installing busts of Mussolini and Hitler in Italian and German plazas.

With money from the government, a laudatory documentary has been released entitled *The Destiny of the Marshal*. The mystique of the military hero, victim of Judeo-Bolshevik vindictiveness (bolstered, according to this demonology, by the

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treacherous "bourgeois parties" and the monarch), is used to legitimize the current ruling alliance. Exiled King Michael, who arrested Antonescu in August 1944 and brought Romania into the anti-fascist coalition, is portrayed as a "felon" and "coward." Restoring Antonescu's image is a symbolic counterpart to the methodical denigration of Romania's short-lived democratic episode of 1944-45. Antonescu's myth is a crucial ingredient for the shaping of a new authoritarian political culture.

Is Iliescu happy with this state of affairs? Or is he hostage to political forces that he can't manage fully? Acquaintances of the president claim that his values (often described as "Gorbachevite") can't be reconciled with the extreme nationalism of his current bedfellows. In reality, he seems to relish the situation. When I asked him, in June 1994, how Romania would get out of its current crisis, he smiled engagingly and replied, "What crisis are you talking about? The current government is performing well and is doing what IMF experts want it to do." This may be true, but the government also sets the agenda when it comes to matters vital for the transition to democracy: developing a civic culture, fostering tolerance, opening the economy to foreign investment, fighting corruption, and so on.

These values are hardly compatible with having the revengeful, fiercely anti-Hungarian PUNR as a coalition partner. PUNR's chairman is the mayor of the Transylvanian town of Cluj, the notorious Gheorghe Funar. He recently proclaimed Iliescu to be a "stooge of the Hungarian traitors." In Funar's Cluj, economic and political corruption have flourished, together with grotesque attacks on the city's historical legacy (attacks aimed especially at Hungarian cultural influences). Obsessed with ethnic purity, Funar is potentially Romania's version of Radovan Karadzić, the sociopath responsible for mass murder in Bosnia.

Iliescu's real or fake exasperation with Funar was expressed when his spokesman Traian Chebeleu declared that Cluj's mayor belonged in a mental institution. In the meantime, PUNR members run the ministries of education, justice, and agriculture. The anti-Semitic Romania Mare party is in full control of the Ministry of Culture. The secretary of state, Mihai Ungheanu, has a record of racist publications, charging Jews with a "Holocaust of the Romanian culture" during the Stalinist years. (Ungheanu has also accused this author of being on the payroll of American "Jewish plutocrats.")

Much of this is the result of Iliescu's lingering hostility to pluralism. Once committed to Leninism, he remains convinced that its luminous ideals still have something to offer. So far, so good: after all, there are neocommunists coming back in other countries as well. Why so much fuss about Romania?

The answer lies in the potentially explosive mixture there. First come the almost two million Hungarians, whose rights to self-management and cultural autonomy are denied by virtually all Romanian parties, whether in the government or in opposition. Second, because of Iliescu's association with communist-nationalist groups, the country's break with Ceausescuism has slowed significantly. Although there is no full-fledged restoration, and ordinary life is not as exacting as it was under Ceausescu, the very fact that there are rumors that Nicu, his son and would-be successor, is considering a run for the presidency in 1996 indicates an ongoing abnormality.

Some polls show that Iliescu's popularity is dwindling and that many people are looking for a political alternative. The political opposition, however, is fragmented and beset with personal rivalries. The Democratic Convention (an umbrella for the major opposition forces) recently split. If the opposition is unable to offer a united platform articulating the need for radical reforms, Iliescu will likely win again.

Romania's media are boisterous and vibrantly ouspoken—often to Iliescu's chagrin. But journalists are frustrated: the more they expose corruption, nepotism, and Byzantine clientist schemes, the less the effect. Bucharest's rulers simply react with scorn.

The idea of accountability has little resonance in Romania. Privatization goes slowly, and foreign investment is much less than in Central Europe. Still, Iliescu (and official Washington) argue that Romania is a quiet place, which in a way is true. The convulsions of 1989 through 1991,

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which included the frightening raids in Bucharest by miners guided by secret police officers, have not been repeated. Mudslinging continues to poison public discourse, but this is not peculiar to Romania. Romanian problems are linked to moral and institutional dilemmas, especially the lack of political imagination in a president allied with some of the worst political forces in the country. Nationalism of the ugliest sort is served up as balm for wounded social sentiments. Unlike other countries where one can speak of the "end of decommunization," Romania has yet to start it. The issue is not simply political justice, but the deep need for myth-breaking self-criticism.

Romanian decommunization will have to address the legacies of tribal nationalism, anti-Semitism, and recalcitrant Stalinism, all of which converge in the country's political culture. Decommunization will necessarily entail defascization. Even democratic intellectuals are reluctant to examine critically the pre-1944 legacy of military dictatorship, racist legislation, persecution of minorities, and so on. Although government, as well as opposition politicians, may admit that some problems existed, the predominant belief is that there was nothing fundamentally wrong before communism. This delusion is further accentuated when Iliescu's allies spew out patriotic venom at any suggestion that a cathartic exploration of the past might be useful.

Research on crimes by the Romanian army and police in Transnistria during World War II is denounced as anti-Romanian, while blatant efforts to deny the Holocaust in Romanian territories are funded by the government-sponsored Romanian Cultural Foundation. When Adrian Nastase, head of the ruling party and chairman of the Parliament's Chamber of Deputies, visited Washington, he bluntly stated that for his generation "the Antonescu issue is irrelevant" and that "any insistence on past atrocities is counter-productive."

One cause of the contemporary situation is the fragility of civil society. Rumors and suspicions are rampant, especially about occult-like secret police operations. There are reasons to believe some of them. Competing secret services (at least eight) are still active, and it is often difficult for the public to discern who holds power.

The problem remains the absence of an alternative vision for the country—a vision based on a realistic assessment of tradition, resources, and opportunities. And somehow, democratic oppositionists will have to overcome their fissures and personal rivalries so that they can counter ethnocentric demagoguery and affirm the values of legality, responsibility, and individual freedom. To the fear, hatred, and selective amnesia generated by the ruling party's allies, the opposition must put forth a program of rights, truth, memory, and civic solidarity. Otherwise, the future will be a continuation of the current fatigue, resignation, and cyclical patriotic hysteria. □

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50 YEARS AFTER HIROSHIMA

Jean Bethke Elshtain

In 1989 a young scholar named Jeff Smith published a book entitled *Unthinking the Unthinkable: Nuclear Weapons and Western Culture*, a book that received too little attention at the time or subsequently, for that matter. Dissatisfied with economic and psychological analyses of "the bomb," Smith decided the discussion of nuclear weapons needed to be placed in a much longer historical perspective than the past fifty years. Beginning with the startling and nigh obscene fact that the first atomic test was code-named Trinity and was thought of by at least some of its participants in quasi-religious terms (the release of "forces heretofore reserved to the Almighty"), Smith notes that such language "expresses the feeling that atomic weapons are a radically new thing, so different from all other weapons and devices in the magnitude of their power as to be indescribable in everyday terms." This tends to place nuclear weapons outside the bounds of rational discourse—we murmur about the ineffable, about horrors no words can describe.

But describe them we must and, in the process, engage in acts of demystification that put nuclear weapons back into history, back into the sphere of political contestation and debate. That I took to be Smith's most salient point: take nuclear weapons off their quasi-metaphysical pedestal. Oddly enough, what might be called "nuclear exceptionalism" spurred a good bit of anti-nuclear politics. There is nothing more dangerous, many people argued, nothing more psychically corrupting, nothing more to be abhorred, and the like. This tended to draw a sharp line between nuclear weapons and all other kinds. Nuclear weapons were in a class by themselves, contrasted with the all-purpose category of "conventional weapons." As a result, these latter seemed less awful, despite the fact that the body counts from conventional destruction in World War II were far higher than those caused by the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

This brief argument against nuclear exceptionalism is meant to remind us of the multiple routes to high body counts. Consider, for example, the hideous bloodletting in Rwanda carried out by machete, a very old-fashioned instrument for hacking people to death. Consider concentration camps, systematic rape, rounding up and "disappearing" people, mass shootings in the forests—old fashioned methods of destruction, recently revived for the purpose of ethnic cleansing.

Why focus on nuclear weapons, then? If one strips away the eschatological fever that such a focus seems to invite, there is still ample reason to be interested, in part because of the very uniqueness of the weapon's use—two times, fifty years ago, not since. In the meantime, our weapons technology has grown less blunt, less clumsy. The truth of the matter is we can now be much more precise in targeting, much more cautious in what we destroy and what we spare. The bombs used on Japan were not "smart" bombs: they obliterated in a horrific way. More horrific than the fire storms that ravaged Tokyo or Dresden? Not by an actual calculus of immediate loss of life. Yet we remain uniquely fascinated and horrified.

As World War II recedes into the historic distance, the tendency for certain events to stand out, even to stand alone and somewhat untethered to

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politics, grows apace, especially, or so I shall suggest, regarding the Hiroshima event. But stripped of their situatedness in time and place, terrible happenings become awfully abstract, grist for many mills. For example: in today's climate of cultural criticism, one hears the question: Who has a right to speak? Will it be revisionist historians or World War II vets; victims or victors; participants or bystanders? Who is authorized to define the bomb's meaning and purpose?

The Smithsonian Institution skirmish over the Enola Gay exhibition is but the latest, and one of the most bitter, of many controversies. But the question, in one form or another, has been there for a long time. I am sympathetic to the concerns expressed by veterans over the way in which the original text for the Smithsonian was cast—for the Japanese were by no means "innocent" defenders of a unique culture and nothing more in this matter. Still, a hard version of their claim—say Paul Fussell's insistence that only soldiers who were about to be sent to invade the Japanese mainland are now in a position to make strong arguments ("Thank God for the atom bomb")—goes too far. Fussell mocks historians who were infants in prams in 1945, who make pronouncements on the bomb today. But if one pushes this idea, it would mean the end of history and intellectual life altogether.

John Keegan wasn't at Agincourt, but has written vividly and brilliantly about it. As I note in my book, *Women and War,* Fussell's argument means that women by definition cannot write about wars since they haven't fought in them. They are history's prototypical noncombatants. (That is changing, in the United States at least, but not by much.) It would mean whites couldn't write about slavery—Eugene Genovese's classic would never have appeared. In truth, no one can claim to have a privileged position from which to proclaim the "last word" in the matter of the atomic bomb. We rightly accord great weight to what veterans and survivors have to say, but that isn't the same thing as giving them the only word or the final one.

What kept our preoccupation with nuclear weapons alive for so long was our ongoing fear that they *might* be used in a major strategic exchange between the two great superpowers. By contrast, the Holocaust, or the matter of genocide, is ever more vivid because we have seen so many subsequent genocidal initiatives—not abstractly cast but concretely manifest. Inevitably, when we read about ethnic cleansing, our minds are carried back to events in Central Europe a half century ago. But, in part because of the embrace by so many of nuclear exceptionalism, the massive use of conventional weapons—say U.S. carpet bombing of Iraqi forces in the Gulf War—is dwarfed by comparison. (To be fair, our use of airpower in Iraq was designed to kill combatants, not non-combatants, but the sheer number of sorties and tons of ordnance was mind-boggling, yet all this quickly disappeared from our mental radar screens.

The victory of nuclear exceptionalism tends to decouple the use of "conventional" weapons from the use of atomic weaponry. Here the dominant discourse has virtually guaranteed discontinuity. In the matter of genocide, however, we routinely situate subsequent events in a comparative continuum with the horror of Nazi genocide. We don't say that we care less about what is happening in the Balkans because it comes nowhere near to what happened in Nazi-occupied Europe. But there is a distinct tendency to put conventional weapons and atomic weapons on two altogether separate tracks. This is very odd on the face of it.

Perhaps the best one can do so many years later is to keep atomic bombs in one's sight as a historical and political phenomenon. Without indulging in counter-factual games, it is important to ask whether things might have gone differently; what other options might have been present. How large a role did sheer technological drive play—"We've got these things and by god we're going to use them"—or our commitment to unconditional surrender, long suggested as a reason for U.S. slowness to respond to possible peace overtures? What ethical restraints persisted despite the war's toll on our collective moral wits? For example, *Commonweal*, the Catholic lay journal, condemned terror bombing in 1942, as did many other Catholic journals of opinion—on moral grounds. Before Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Reinhold Niebuhr called the total war mentality "nauseous self-righteousness." The dropping of the bombs was an occasion for sorrow and criticism on the part of several leading Protestant and Catholic writers. *Commonweal* concluded its editorial condemning the atomic bombs in these words.

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For our war, for our purposes, to save American lives, we have reached the point where we say that anything goes. That is what the Germans said at the beginning of the war. Once we have won our war, we say that there must be international law. Undoubtedly. When it is created, Germans, Japanese, and Americans will remember with horror the days of their shame.

Well, we do not look back in horror, not as we should. We are not the Germans and not the Japanese, and we have less to answer for. But answer we should and must. The minority favoring ethical restraint was not the dominant voice, but it was an important voice and it should not be forgotten. Now that an era has ended—now that we have entered the long tunnel at the end of the light, as Václav Havel puts it—my hunch is that how we remember and what we remember of events in mid-century is bound to be altered. The civic energy that sustained our dominant "reading" of events is depleted.

Hiroshima seems long ago and far away. As the World War II generation dies—that generation of Americans that served so well and gave so much—the passion will perhaps go out of this and other issues, like air escaping a punctured tire. The debates will become more abstract, more depersonalized, less interesting. Because Hiroshima, however hideous and—in my view—unjustified, can still be seen as an act of war, whereas the Nazi machinery of mechanized death seems something else altogether, my own sense is that interest in the bombings will wane over the next quarter-century. There will be good and bad reasons for that. The bad reason is the deepening of the view that what is done in the heat and fog of a terrible war cannot and should not be revisited critically and ethically (by contrast to tendentiously and with an eye to setting up new demons and angels—as in the Smithsonian fracas, which has only reinforced militant self-exculpation by those angered at the arch-revisionists). The good reason is that Hiroshima and Nagasaki must inevitably become reinserted in the warp and woof of history, not viewed as symbols hovering above the bloody ground that was World War II but as particularly powerful and tormenting events on that very ground.

John Rawls

The fiftieth year since the bombing of Hiroshima is a time to reflect about what one should think of it. Is it really a great wrong, as many now think, and many also thought then, or is it perhaps justified after all? I believe that both the fire-bombing of Japanese cities beginning in the spring of 1945 and the later atomic bombing of Hiroshima on August 6 were very great wrongs, and rightly seen as such. In order to support this opinion, I set out what I think to be the principles governing the conduct of war—*jus in bello*—of democratic peoples. These peoples[1] have different ends of war than nondemocratic, especially totalitarian, states, such as Germany and Japan, which sought the domination and exploitation of subjected peoples, and in Germany's case, their enslavement if not extermination.

Although I cannot properly justify them here, I begin by setting out six principles and assumptions in support of these judgments. I hope they seem not unreasonable; and certainly they are familiar, as they are closely related to much traditional thought on this subject.

1. The aim of a just war waged by a decent democratic society is a just and lasting peace between peoples, especially with its present enemy.

2. A decent democratic society is fighting against a state that is not democratic. This follows from the fact that democratic peoples do not wage war against each other;[2] and since we are con-

I am grateful to Burton Dreben, Thomas Nagel, and T. M. Scanlon for discussing this essay with me. Responsibility for the opinions expressed is, of course, my own.

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cerned with the rules of war as they apply to such peoples, we assume the society fought against is nondemocratic and that its expansionist aims threatened the security and free institutions of democratic regimes and caused the war.[3]

3. In the conduct of war, a democratic society must carefully distinguish three groups: the state's leaders and officials, its soldiers, and its civilian population. The reason for these distinctions rests on the principle of responsibility: since the state fought against is not democratic, the civilian members of the society cannot be those who organized and brought on the war. This was done by its leaders and officials assisted by other elites who control and staff the state apparatus. They are responsible, they willed the war, and for doing that, they are criminals. But civilians, often kept in ignorance and swayed by state propaganda, are not.[4] And this is so even if some civilians knew better and were enthusiastic for the war. In a nation's conduct of war many such marginal cases may exist, but they are irrelevant. As for soldiers, they, just as civilians, and leaving aside the upper ranks of an officer class, are not responsible for the war, but are conscripted or in other ways forced into it, their patriotism often cruelly and cynically exploited. The grounds on which they may be attacked directly are not that they are responsible for the war but that a democratic people cannot defend itself in any other way, and defend itself it must do. About this there is no choice.

4. A decent democratic society must respect the human rights of the members of the other side, both civilians and soldiers, for two reasons. One is because they simply have these rights by the law of peoples. The other reason is to teach enemy soldiers and civilians the content of those rights by the example of how they hold in their own case. In this way their significance is best brought home to them. They are assigned a certain status, the status of the members of some human society who possess rights as human persons.[5] In the case of human rights in war the aspect of status as applied to civilians is given a strict interpretation. This means, as I understand it here, that they can never be attacked directly except in times of extreme crisis, the nature of which I discuss below.

5. Continuing with the thought of teaching the content of human rights, the next principle is that just peoples by their actions and proclamations are to foreshadow during war the kind of peace they aim for and the kind of relations they seek between nations. By doing so, they show in an open and public way the nature of their aims and the kind of people they are. These last duties fall largely on the leaders and officials of the governments of democratic peoples, since they are in the best position to speak for the whole people and to act as the principle applies. Although all the preceding principles also specify duties of statesmanship, this is especially true of 4 and 5. The way a war is fought and the actions ending it endure in the historical memory of peoples and may set the stage for future war. This duty of statesmanship must always be held in view.

6. Finally, we note the place of practical means-end reasoning in judging the appropriateness of an action or policy for achieving the aim of war or for not causing more harm than good. This mode of thought—whether carried on by (classical) utilitarian reasoning, or by cost-benefit analysis, or by weighing national interests, or in other ways—must always be framed within and strictly limited by the preceding principles. The norms of the conduct of war set up certain lines that bound just action. War plans and strategies, and the conduct of battles, must lie within their limits. (The only exception, I repeat, is in times of extreme crisis.)

In connection with the fourth and fifth principles of the conduct of war, I have said that they are binding especially on the leaders of nations. They are in the most effective position to represent their people's aims and obligations, and sometimes they become statesmen. But who is a statesman? There is no office of statesman, as there is of president, or chancellor, or prime minister. The statesman is an ideal, like the ideal of the truthful or virtuous individual. Statesmen are presidents or prime ministers who become statesmen through their exemplary performance and leadership in their office in difficult and trying times and manifest strength, wisdom, and courage. They guide their people through turbulent and dangerous periods for which they are esteemed always, as one of their great statesmen.

The ideal of the statesman is suggested by the saying: the politician looks to the next election,

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the statesman to the next generation. It is the task of the student of philosophy to look to the permanent conditions and the real interests of a just and good democratic society. It is the task of the statesman, however, to discern these conditions and interests in practice; the statesman sees deeper and further than most others and grasps what needs to be done. The statesman must get it right, or nearly so, and hold fast to it. Washington and Lincoln were statesmen. Bismarck was not. He did not see Germany's real interests far enough into the future and his judgment and motives were often distorted by his class interests and his wanting himself alone to be chancellor of Germany. Statesmen need not be selfless and may have their own interests when they hold office, yet they must be selfless in their judgments and assessments of society's interests and not be swayed, especially in war and crisis, by passions of revenge and retaliation against the enemy.

Above all, they are to hold fast to the aim of gaining a just peace, and avoid the things that make achieving such a peace more difficult. Here the proclamations of a nation should make clear (the statesman must see to this) that the enemy people are to be granted an autonomous regime of their own and a decent and full life once peace is securely reestablished. Whatever they may be told by their leaders, whatever reprisals they may reasonably fear, they are not to be held as slaves or serfs after surrender,[6] or denied in due course their full liberties; and they may well achieve freedoms they did not enjoy before, as the Germans and the Japanese eventually did. The statesman knows, if others do not, that all descriptions of the enemy people (not their rulers) inconsistent with this are impulsive and false.

Turning now to Hiroshima and the fire-bombing of Tokyo, we find that neither falls under the exemption of extreme crisis. One aspect of this is that since (let's suppose) there are no absolute rights—rights that must be respected in all circumstances—there are occasions when civilians can be attacked directly by aerial bombing. Were there times during the war when Britain could properly have bombed Hamburg and Berlin? Yes, when Britain was alone and desperately facing Germany's superior might; moreover, this period would extend until Russia had clearly beat off the first German assault in the summer and fall of 1941, and would be able to fight Germany until the end. Here the cutoff point might be placed differently, say the summer of 1942, and certainly by Stalingrad.[7] I shan't dwell on this, as the crucial matter is that under no conditions could Germany be allowed to win the war, and this for two basic reasons: first, the nature and history of constitutional democracy and its place in European culture; and second, the peculiar evil of Nazism and the enormous and uncalculable moral and political evil it represented for civilized society.

The peculiar evil of Nazism needs to be understood, since in some circumstances a democratic people might better accept defeat if the terms of peace offered by the adversary were reasonable and moderate, did not subject them to humiliation and looked forward to a workable and decent political relationship. Yet characteristic of Hitler was that he accepted no possibility at all of a political relationship with his enemies. They were always to be cowed by terror and brutality, and ruled by force. From the beginning the campaign against Russia, for example, was a war of destruction against Slavic peoples, with the original inhabitants remaining, if at all, only as serfs. When Goebbels and others protested that the war could not be won that way, Hitler refused to listen.[8]

Yet it is clear that while the extreme crisis exemption held for Britain in the early stages of the war, it never held at any time for the United States in its war with Japan. The principles of the conduct of war were always applicable to it. Indeed, in the case of Hiroshima many involved in higher reaches of the government recognized the questionable character of the bombing and that limits were being crossed. Yet during the discussions among allied leaders in June and July 1945, the weight of the practical means-end reasoning carried the day. Under the continuing pressure of war, such moral doubts as there were failed to gain an express and articulated view. As the war progressed, the heavy fire-bombing of civilians in the capitals of Berlin and Tokyo and elsewhere was increasingly accepted on the allied side. Although after the outbreak of war Roosevelt had urged both sides not to commit the inhuman barbarism of bombing civilians, by 1945 allied leaders came to assume that Roosevelt would have used the bomb

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on Hiroshima.[9] The bombing grew out of what had happened before.

The practical means-end reasons to justify using the atomic bomb on Hiroshima were the following:

The bomb was dropped to hasten the end of the war. It is clear that Truman and most other allied leaders thought it would do that. Another reason was that it would save lives where the lives counted are the lives of American soldiers. The lives of Japanese, military or civilian, presumably counted for less. Here the calculations of least time and most lives saved were mutually supporting. Moreover, dropping the bomb would give the Emperor and the Japanese leaders a way to save face, an important matter given Japanese samurai culture. Indeed, at the end a few top Japanese leaders wanted to make a last sacrificial stand but were overruled by others supported by the Emperor, who ordered surrender on August 12, having received word from Washington that the Emperor could stay provided it was understood that he had to comply with the orders of the American military commander. The last reason I mention is that the bomb was dropped to impress the Russians with American power and make them more agreeable with our demands. This reason is highly disputed but urged by some critics and scholars as important.

The failure of these reasons to reflect the limits on the conduct of war is evident, so I focus on a different matter: the failure of statesmanship on the part of allied leaders and why it might have occurred. Truman once described the Japanese as beasts and to be treated as such; yet how foolish it sounds now to call the Germans or the Japanese barbarians and beasts![10] Of the Nazis and Tojo militarists, yes, but they are not the German and the Japanese people. Churchill later granted that he carried the bombing too far, led by passion and the intensity of the conflict.[11] A duty of statesmanship is not to allow such feelings, natural and inevitable as they may be, to alter the course a democratic people should best follow in striving for peace. The statesman understands that relations with the present enemy have special importance: for as I have said, war must be openly and publicly conducted in ways that make a lasting and amicable peace possible with a defeated enemy, and prepares its people for how they may be expected to be treated. Their present fears of being subjected to acts of revenge and retaliation must be put to rest; present enemies must be seen as associates in a shared and just future peace.

These remarks make it clear that, in my judgment, both Hiroshima and the fire-bombing of Japanese cities were great evils that the duties of statesmanship require political leaders to avoid in the absence of the crisis exemption. I also believe this could have been done at little cost in further casualties. An invasion was unnecessary at that date, as the war was effectively over. However, whether that is true or not makes no difference. Without the crisis exemption, those bombings are great evils. Yet it is clear that an articulate expression of the principles of just war introduced at that time would not have altered the outcome. It was simply too late. A president or prime minister must have carefully considered these questions, preferably long before, or at least when they had the time and leisure to think things out. Reflections on just war cannot be heard in the daily round of the pressure of events near the end of the hostilities; too many are anxious and impatient, and simply worn out.

Similarly, the justification of constitutional democracy and the basis of the rights and duties it must respect should be part of the public political culture and discussed in the many associations of civic society as part of one's education. It is not clearly heard in day-to-day ordinary politics, but must be presupposed as the background, not the daily subject of politics, except in special circumstances. In the same way, there was not sufficient prior grasp of the fundamental importance of the principles of just war for the expression of them to have blocked the appeal of practical means-end reasoning in terms of a calculus of lives, or of the least time to end the war, or of some other balancing of costs and benefits. This practical reasoning justifies too much, too easily, and provides a way for a dominant power to quiet any moral worries that may arise. If the principles of war are put forward at that time, they easily become so many more considerations to be balanced in the scales.

Another failure of statesmanship was not to try to enter negotiations with the Japanese before

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any drastic steps such as the fire-bombing of cities or the bombing of Hiroshima were taken. A conscientious attempt to do so was morally necessary. As a democratic people, we owed that to the Japanese people—whether to their government is another matter. There had been discussions in Japan for some time about finding a way to end the war, and on June 26 the government had been instructed by the Emperor to do so.[12] It must surely have realized that with the navy destroyed and the outer islands taken, the war was lost. True, the Japanese were deluded by the hope that the Russians might prove to be their allies,[13] but negotiations are precisely to disabuse the other side of delusions of that kind. A statesman is not free to consider that such negotiations may lessen the desired shock value of subsequent attacks.

Truman was in many ways a good, at times a very good president. But the way he ended the war showed he failed as a statesman. For him it was an opportunity missed, and a loss to the country and its armed forces as well. It is sometimes said that questioning the bombing of Hiroshima is an insult to the American troops who fought the war. This is hard to understand. We should be able to look back and consider our faults after fifty years. We expect the Germans and the Japanese to do that—"*Vergangenheitsverarbeitung*"—as the Germans say. Why shouldn't we? It can't be that we think we waged the war without moral error!

None of this alters Germany's and Japan's responsibility for the war nor their behavior in conducting it. Emphatically to be repudiated are two nihilist doctrines. One is expressed by Sherman's remark, "War is hell," so anything goes to get it over with as soon as one can. The other says that we are all guilty so we stand on a level and no one can blame anyone else. These are both superficial and deny all reasonable distinctions; they are invoked falsely to try to excuse our misconduct or to plead that we cannot be condemned.

The moral emptiness of these nihilisms is manifest in the fact that just and decent civilized societies—their institutions and laws, their civil life and background culture and mores—all depend absolutely on making significant moral and political distinctions in all situations. Certainly war is a kind of hell, but why should that mean that all moral distinctions cease to hold? And granted also that sometimes all or nearly all may be to some degree guilty, that does not mean that all are equally so. There is never a time when we are free from all moral and political principles and restraints. These nihilisms are pretenses to be free of those principles and restraints that always apply to us fully.

Notes

[1] I sometimes use the term "peoples" to mean much the same as nations, especially when I want to contrast peoples with states and a state's apparatus.

[2] I assume that democratic peoples do not go to war against each other. There is considerable evidence of this important idea. See Michael Doyle's two part article, "Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs," *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol. 12, Summer and Fall 1983. See his summary of the evidence in the first part, pp. 206-232.

[3] Responsibility for war rarely falls on only one side and this must be granted. Yet some dirty hands are dirtier than others, and sometimes even with dirty hands a democratic people would still have the right and even the duty to defend itself from the other side. This is clear in World War II.

[4] Here I follow Michael Walzer's *Just and Unjust Wars* (Basic Books, 1977).

[5] For the idea of status, I am indebted to discussions of Frances Kamm and Thomas Nagel.

[6] See Churchill's remarks explaining the meaning of "unconditional surrender" in *The Hinge of Fate* (Houghton Mifflin, 1950), pp. 685-688.

[7] I might add here that a balancing of interests is not involved. Rather, we have a matter of judgment as to whether certain objective circumstances are present which constitute the extreme crisis exemption. As with any other complex concept, that of such an exemption is to some degree vague. Whether or not the concept applies rests on judgment.

[8] On Goebbels's and others' protests, see Alan Bullock, *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny* (London: Oldham's Press, 1952), Ch. 12, §5, pp. 633-644.

[9] For an account of events, see David M. McCullough, *Truman* (Simon and Schuster, 1992), Ch. 9:IV and 10, pp.390-464; and Barton Bernstein, "The Atomic Bombings Reconsidered," *Foreign Affairs*, 74:1, Jan-Feb 1995.

[10] See McCullough's *Truman*, p. 458, the exchange between Truman and Senator Russell of Georgia in August 1945.

[11] See Martin Gilbert, *Winston Churchill: Never Despair*, Vol. VIII: (Houghton Mifflin, 1988), reflecting later on Dresden, p. 259.

[12] See Gerhard Weinberg, *A World at Arms* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1994), pp. 886-889.

[13] See Weinberg, ibid., p. 886.

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Ronald Takaki

"I would have dropped the bomb to save even one American life," a fellow scholar argued at a conference. The comment stunned me into silence. In fact, I did not fully comprehend it until I returned to my hotel. Was there anything I could have said in reply, I wondered; was the moral divide between the two of us so deep that there was no possibility of discussion? As I flew home that afternoon, reflecting on that incident at 35,000 feet, I thought about the ferocious controversy at the Smithsonian and its debate over numbers. How many American military deaths would have been incurred in an invasion of Japan? One, forty thousand, or half a million?

"One" was my colleague's hyperbole. "Half a million" was Harry Truman's claim, made in the memoirs he published ten years after Hiroshima. "Forty thousand" was the estimate made by the Joint War Plans Committee in its top secret report of June 15, 1945. The Joint Chiefs of Staff met with Truman to discuss this report, and on the basis of the low casualty estimates, he authorized the invasion of Japan.

But, as I gazed at the continent below, I decided I did not want to get mired in the numbers debate. Wasn't there a difference between civilian and military casualties? Japan, Germany, England, and the United States had blurred that line during World War II, before Hiroshima—at Nanjing, Coventry, Dresden, and Tokyo. The problem with the numbers game is that the massive and indiscriminate killing of civilians is never morally justifiable. And why argue over numbers when an invasion and the atomic bombing itself might not have even been militarily necessary?

Actually, at the time, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, General Douglas MacArthur, and Chief of Staff Admiral William Leahy agreed that an atomic attack on Japanese cities was militarily unnecessary. All of them believed that Japan had already been beaten and that the war would soon end. As early as June 1945, what remained to be resolved was how quickly and in what way. The United States controlled both the timetable and the choice of means for ending the conflict.

By then, American policymakers knew that Japan was asking the Soviet Union to help negotiate a peace and was ready to surrender if it were allowed to keep the emperor. The demand for "unconditional surrender" had become a popular slogan, but within policymaking circles, the thinking on this issue was not inflexible. In June, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had approved a proposal for a conditional surrender.

But after the successful atomic explosion at Alamogordo on July 16, Truman and Secretary of State James Byrnes chose not to explore the possibility of a negotiated peace. They knew that they had a powerful weapon that they could deploy not only to defeat Japan but also to bully the Soviet Union into cooperation, even submission—a strategy that Gar Alperovitz has termed "atomic diplomacy."

This cold war explanation, however, overlooks the significance of race in America's history as well as in the decision to drop the bomb. What made it possible for Truman and Byrnes to think of unleashing a "combat demonstration" against Japanese civilians in order to show the new weapon to Stalin?

At the center of the fateful decision was Truman. Like many Americans, he found himself swept into the wartime maelstrom of anti-Japanese rage, driven by a fierce memory of Pearl Harbor and images of the Japanese as demons, savages, and beasts. But the hostility against the Japanese was pervasive in American culture long before December 7, 1941, and Truman was part of this culture. As a young man, Harry Truman had harbored prejudices. In a letter to his future wife, Bess, he wrote on June 22, 1911: "I think one man is as good as another so long as he's honest and decent and not a nigger or Chinaman. Uncle Will [Young, a confederate veteran] says that the Lord made a white man of dust, a nigger from mud, then threw up what was left and it came down a

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Chinaman. He does hate Chinese and Japs. So do I. It is race prejudice I guess. But I am strongly of the opinion that negroes ought to be in Africa, yellow men in Asia, and white men in Europe and America."

Truman had little in his social and intellectual experiences to challenge his stereotypes and prejudices. After the bombing of Hiroshima, Truman justified the devastation: "When you have to deal with a beast you have to treat him as a beast."

After the war, Truman claimed he never lost any sleep over his decision, but actually he felt a troubling ambivalence. Although he had prejudices, Truman was aware of the fact that America, despite its history of racism, stood for certain great principles that had been forged in the American Revolution and the Civil War. Nazism, with its ideology of Aryan racial supremacy, was compelling Americans to rededicate themselves to their nation's highest principles.

President Roosevelt understood this imperative when he framed the country's war purpose: America stood for the "four freedoms" (freedom of speech and expression, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear). Our commitment to these freedoms, Roosevelt explained, buttressed America's condemnation of racism. "The principle on which this country was founded and by which it has always been governed is that Americanism is a matter of mind and heart. Americanism is not, and never was, a matter of race or ancestry." Truman reaffirmed these American ideals. When he welcomed home the Japanese-American soldiers of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, he told them: "You fought for the free nations of the world . . . you fought not only the enemy, you fought prejudice—and you won."

After the destruction of Hiroshima, Truman showed a seemingly inordinate need to justify his decision, again and again, suggesting that it nagged at him. He seemed to be unable to deny completely the humanity of the enemy.

On August 9, after he had been urged to destroy Japan completely, Truman responded soberly in a private letter: "I know that Japan is a terribly cruel and uncivilized nation in warfare but I can't bring myself to believe that, because they are beasts, we should ourselves act in that same manner. For myself I certainly regret the necessity of wiping out whole populations because of the 'pigheadedness' of leaders of a nation, and, for your information, I am not going to do it unless it is absolutely necessary. My object is to save as many American lives as possible but I also have a humane feeling for the women and children in Japan."

That very day, however, an atomic bomb destroyed Nagasaki. At Potsdam, Truman had told Stimson he hoped only one bomb would be dropped. He had not expected a second bomb to be dropped so soon after the attack on Hiroshima, and immediately ordered the military not to drop a third. He told Henry Wallace that "the thought of wiping out another 100,000 people was too horrible." He did not like the idea of killing "all those kids." For days afterward, Truman complained of terrible headaches. Wallace asked: "Physical or figurative?" Truman replied: "Both."

Truman's anguish was understandable. A thoughtful and sensitive man, he had seen that the world was hurtling toward an uncertain and fearful future. On July 16, while waiting for word from Alamogordo, Truman described in his diary the "absolute ruin" and the terrible scenes of war refugees he had witnessed in Berlin as he traveled to Potsdam. Truman then recorded his reflections on the world's long grim history of warfare: "I thought of Carthage, Baalbek, Jerusalem, Rome, Atlantis, Peking, Babylon, Nineveh, Scipio, Rameses II, Titus, Herman, Sherman, Jenghis Khan, Alexander, Darius the Great. But Hitler only destroyed Stalingrad—and Berlin. I hope for some sort of peace—but I fear that machines are ahead of morals by some centuries and when morals catch up perhaps there'll be no reason for any of it. I hope not. But we are only termites on a planet and maybe when we bore too deeply into the planet there'll [be] a reckoning—who knows?"

Haunted by a similar fear, Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson also struggled to gain clarity on the moral issues. He had been a member of the Interim Committee, which made the recommendation to drop the bomb. During a meeting of this committee on June 1, 1945, according to J. Robert Oppenheimer, Stimson seemed melancholy. The secretary of war expressed dismay at the "appalling" lack of conscience and compassion ushered in by the war, reported Oppenheimer. Stimson

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stated that he was disturbed by the "complacency, the indifference, and the silence with which we greeted the mass bombings in Europe, and, above all, Japan." He said that he could not feel "exultant" about the bombings of Hamburg, Dresden, and Tokyo. At Potsdam, the secretary of war tried to persuade Truman to pursue a negotiated peace. Stimson refused to be driven by a rage for revenge, and did not want to add unnecessarily to the horror of the war.

Four days after the bombing of Hiroshima, Stimson reflected on the tragedy of the avoidable killing of so many people. In his diary, he recalled how at Potsdam he had advocated the "continuance" of the emperor with certain conditions. But "the President and Byrnes struck that out" of the Potsdam Declaration. Then Stimson noted the terrible influence of stereotypes: "There has been a good deal of uninformed agitation against the Emperor in this country mostly by people who know no more about Japan than has been given them by Gilbert and Sullivan's 'Mikado,' and I found today that curiously enough it had gotten deeply embedded in the minds of influential people in the State Department." That day, the United States accepted an offer from Japan to surrender that implicitly allowed the emperor to remain.

Today, in our increasingly multicultural society, Hiroshima continues to intrude upon our consciousness: it is a past that is not even past, to borrow from Faulkner. The bombing of Hiroshima was the culmination of a crossing to a new level of international violence: the rules of warfare had been radically redefined during World War II. Recognizing this horror, Truman and Stimson experienced painful ambivalence: they sensed the tragic meaning of the destruction they were helping to unleash. They possessed a complexity of thought and a broad range of feelings that many of us, like my colleague at the conference, seem to lack. They had a perspective on the moral issue of war—what the acceptable conduct of warfare was *before* Hiroshima. Whether we will be able to recover that memory remains a challenge. Still we must make the effort—to examine as many of the facts as possible and also to make our own moral judgments about Hiroshima. Not to do so is to avoid responsibility.

Michael Walzer

Though I have argued for many years that the American use of atomic bombs against Japanese cities was wrong, I do not find myself much engaged by one of the questions it raises: should U.S. leaders apologize now to the Japanese people for what we did in 1945? Nor by the questions raised recently in Japan about apologies to the Korean and Chinese people. The wrongs that were done need to be admitted and confronted, but official apologies somehow seem an inadequate, perhaps even a perfunctory, way of doing this. Better, I think, that the U.S. government devote itself to creating the conditions for nuclear disarmament or, more immediately, to stopping the slaughter of civilians in places where we have influence or power. Better that the Japanese government act strongly against anti-Korean prejudice and discrimination in contemporary Japan.

As Ian Buruma reports in his new book *The Wages of Guilt*, a large number of the victims of the Hiroshima bombing were Korean slave laborers at work in the city—who are unmentioned in any of the Japanese memorials. Surely Japan's leaders should address that piece of their history before carrying diplomatic regrets to Seoul. Our own very belated decision to pay reparations to Japanese families interned during World War II is morally more important than any message that President Clinton might deliver even in Hiroshima itself.

But maybe this question about apology is simply a way of stirring up debate and reflection here

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at home. And that is certainly a good thing to do (it is, perhaps, what the original Smithsonian exhibition on the Enola Gay should have been designed to do—instead of arguing, as it apparently did, for a single moral/political position). A public debate, not only about Hiroshima and Nagasaki but also about the fire-bombing of Tokyo and Dresden, about total war and the U.S. role (and other countries' role) in creating it, would be an event of real importance in our political history. Not just liberal breast-beating, which would be no event at all, but a many-sided argument in books, magazines, reviews, exhibits, documentaries, talk shows, and classrooms. We insist often enough that other countries need to come to grips with their past. But the morality of memory applies to us too.

There is one argument in favor of using or, better, since it's a retrospective argument, in justification of having used the bomb that seems to me still worth considering (I have never written about it). The argument is that the reason nuclear weapons have not been used since 1945 is that they were used then. The bombings did not break down a moral limit or set a precedent for the future, as critics at the time argued they would do. Quite the contrary: nuclear terrorism has, so far, had no copycats. The Japanese civilians who lived in Hiroshima and Nagasaki were, on this view, the innocent victims of a (probably unintended) deterrent strategy that worked. Their deaths and injuries were so awful and so frightening that any rational political leader would have to think a long time before doing anything like that again. This may well be true, and if it is, we might describe this outcome as Harry Truman's moral luck: that what he did in 1945, however horrifying at the time, turned out to have long-term benefits. ("Moral luck" is a term philosophers use to suggest that our judgments of political actors are affected by circumstances that don't depend on their good or bad intentions.)

But this argument can't be very comforting to Americans, for what the people who make it are almost certainly thinking is that if we had not used the bomb against Japan, we would have used it in Korea or Vietnam or, though this seems less likely because so much more dangerous, pre-emptively against the Soviet Union. For those were the next occasions, and we were the great power most ready with advanced weapons and accurate delivery systems. Robert McNamara's Vietnam memoir makes it clear that top American military officers wanted to use the bomb against the North in the late 1960s or, at least, to consider using it; it was the civilian leaders, Truman's heirs, who refused even to think about it.

So the deterrence argument amounts to saying that had we not acted wrongly in the forties, we would probably have acted wrongly in the fifties and sixties—and, again, at least in the Korean and Vietnamese cases, at moments when there was no threat to our own territory or population. We would now have different memories to work through (but memories of the same sort) and other necessary public debates to organize.

I have my own vivid memory of marching with a gang of kids through the streets of the Pennsylvania town where I lived in 1945, beating a drum (or, more likely, banging a pot) and shouting in celebration of the news from Hiroshima. I can't report that my own celebration—I was ten years old—was shadowed by moral anxiety. I can't even claim that what I felt was relief, like American soldiers in the Pacific, who had immediate and personal reasons to rejoice, since it was now virtually certain that the war would end without any further risk to their lives. In Pennsylvania, by contrast, that August day was simply a moment of triumph and exaltation. When they touch people who are not children, such moments are dangerous.

St. Augustine argued somewhere that just wars should always be fought by melancholy soldiers, who would not be tempted by war's excitements and who would understand that even triumphs we are right to welcome can be tainted by the means with which they are won. But that is a hard prescription, and I doubt that many American soldiers, or civilians, paused even for a moment in 1945 to mourn Hiroshima's dead. That, at least, is something we ought to be able to do fifty years later. □

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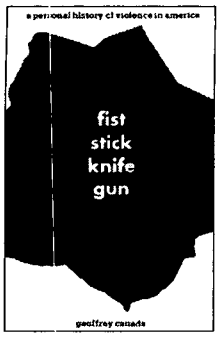

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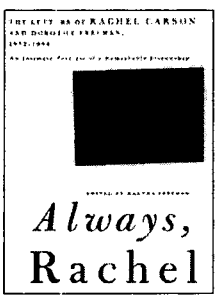

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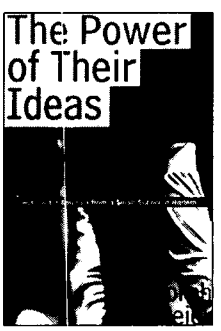

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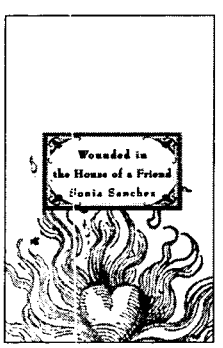

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Marshall Berman

MODERNISM AND HUMAN RIGHTS NEAR THE MILLENNIUM

As we lurch toward the end of the twentieth century, it is easy to think that our public discourse has gone through a core meltdown. The cold war is over, and we are free from the fear that our leaders will blow up the world. But we are menaced by a whole new world of pretexts for people to kill each other. Ethnicity, religion, nationalism, all old and venerable forces in politics, are erupting today with new brutal fervor against all those defined as "other." Wilsonian "self-determination of peoples," a vision so dear to liberals of the early twentieth century, now looks like little more than a preface to Milosevician "ethnic cleansing," a pretext for destroying the peoples next door.

Demagogic chauvinism is thriving all over—in Eastern Europe, in Central Africa, in India, in the Middle East, in our own ghettos and universities, inside Washington's Beltway—who knows where the next flash point will be? What today's demagogues have in common is the power to persuade masses of people that they have nothing in common with each other, and to arouse them to treat their chosen others as nothing. The burning question for our *fin de siècle* turns out to be the desperate appeal Rodney King made during the 1992 Los Angeles riots: "Can't we all get along?"

I believe we can get along, maybe even more, if we get a grasp on some of the big ideas that are floating in our cultural atmosphere, ideas that have the power to bring people together across national and ethnic and class and sexual borderlines. We have a form of liberalism that, far from being innocent and naive, has seen and been through everything. We have a mode of modernism that not only explores our own subjectivity, but empathizes with other people's. We have an idea of human rights that judges and condemns past and present history, but that sees this bad history not as a refutation of the idea of human rights but as its foundation, its basic reason for being. Men and women of the late twentieth century inherit all these ideas; we have to find ways to make them our own.

The idea of human rights has a fascinating history: it has come and gone and come again. Two centuries ago, in the 1790s and 1800s, it was central to European and American political discourse. One century ago, in the 1890s and 1900s, it had become so marginal it nearly disappeared. Now, at the end of the twentieth century, it has come back, full of new life. I want to tell this dramatic story here. It is a story that democratic socialists should want to hear.

All these ideas go back to the age of the American and French Revolutions. For a couple of centuries, they have been colliding with the way things are. But these collisions of ideas and history, when they haven't killed the ideas, have made them stronger, better fit to live in history. Just five years ago these ideas came together and moved millions of people all around the world to put their lives on the line, and millions more to identify with them. Their fusion made 1989 one of the thrilling years in all human history; in a century so rich in horror, it felt like a glorious climax, a grace note. The thrill may be hard to recapture now—how many massacres later?—and yet, not only was it real, but *we were there*. The hopes of 1989 will be harder to fulfill than the activists of that year believed. Yet those hopes refuse to die, and even their failures turn out to make them strong. My

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story could be framed around the question: *How was 1989 possible?*

Some political thinkers today think that questions like this, and stories like the one I want to tell, are illegitimate and self-delusory. The French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard argues, in his book *The Post-Modern Condition*, that all of what he calls *grandes histoires*, or larger stories of a people, are groundless. The hallmark of postmodern thought, Lyotard says, is "incredulity toward metanarrative."[1] But if postmoderns want to justify this incredulity (and not just assert it), they are logically forced to fold it into a metanarrative of their own. In fact, their own *grande histoire* turns out to be quite like the "End of Ideology" narrative of a generation ago. (Both portray the destruction of Marxism as the central event in modern history.)

My feeling is that talk about politics and culture would be a lot clearer if all the talkers would admit that they are telling *grandes histoires*, and try to recognize honestly what their stories are. (Some of us might be telling contradictory stories, but we need to recognize this, too.) Then we could compare these competing stories, see what they put in and what they leave out, and judge what impact they might have on how we want to live.

1789: The Great Modernist Event

I believe that the French Revolution, and especially the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, is the basic modernist event. It brings together some crucial modern ideas and transforms them into social practice: (1)*Natural Rights*, which are itemized in the U.S. Bill of Rights and in the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen. People of the 1790s understood this to mean a belief that every human being was entitled to protection of life, liberty, and property, but also entitled to the new, ambiguous but alluring "pursuit of happiness." The rights featured in 1789 included freedom of speech and communication, and due process of law. Some of these modes of freedom were "negative," protecting people against incursions by their governments; others were "positive," giving the people the right to participate in politics and government.

(2) The *Social Contract* was a foundational act in which modern men and women would come together to create a new community, to establish a public sector, to transform themselves from isolated individuals into citizens who need one another. Finally, (3) *Authenticity* was the idea that a social contract, or indeed any human action, is valid only if we do it freely; we can be bound only by laws and social institutions that are *our own*, freely created by us, not imposed on us against our will.[2]

These ideas of human rights are crystallized in the American Bill of Rights and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen. Both documents date from 1789; Thomas Jefferson, in Paris as the first American Ambassador to France, played an important role in the creation of both. The documents were meant to put "the natural, sacred and inalienable rights of man" permanently on the map of modern politics. And they certainly did. But the rights they promoted turned out to be deeply problematical. It took the whole nineteenth century to unravel their ambiguities and inner contradictions.

Nineteenth-century culture developed an amazing variety of critiques of the rights of 1789. Virtually all intellectuals of note, people with the most disparate beliefs, joined in this polemic: Edmund Burke, Jeremy Bentham, Robert Southey, Samuel Coleridge, William Cobbett, Adam Mueller, the Schlegel brothers, Novalis, Fichte, Thomas Carlyle, Saint-Simon, Proudhon, Fourier, Auguste Comte, Russia's Slavophiles, Hegel and Marx, Nietzsche, Dostoevsky, Emile Durkheim, Ferdinand Toennies, Georges Sorel, Max Nordau, Maurice Barrès, and many more, all honed their minds by assaulting this idea. It almost seemed as if no intellectual could develop his own ideas without first ripping the Rights of Man to shreds. Nietzsche, writing in the 1880s, described the nineteenth century as a century of "revolution against the Revolution." By 1889, the French Revolution's centenary, it was hard to find anyone eminent in Europe or North America who was willing to stand up for its basic ideas.[3]

The 1790s: The First Postmoderns

Here are some of the main nineteenth-century objections to the Rights of Man. Objections 1 and 2 come mainly from the 1790s and 1800s, years when the revolution was fresh, vibrant, and open-ended.

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1. The Declaration generation imagined that rights are "natural," as if they were eternal primal forces like the earth, the sky, the sun. But in fact they are only contingencies, historical accidents, of this time, of that place. Take these documents out of Western Europe or North America, or out of the eighteenth century, and no one will have any idea what they mean. The claim of a cosmic foundation is delusory; these rights, and the human relationships they presuppose, are provincial, not universal. Other societies live in other ways; why should they change to this way?

2. The supposed subject of these rights is impossibly abstract. There is no such person as "man" in the real world. Joseph de Maistre says that if he looks around for "man," he can't find him; all he can see are Englishmen, Frenchmen, Russians, and so on. The category "man" is empty of meaning: real life can be lived only within a particular *community*. What is a community? A human association where people are bound to each other biologically, organically, by prerational emotions. Each people has its own history and its own unfolding inner life. Emphasis on individual rights, and pressure to fulfill individual needs, destroys the primal bonds of community, and makes us disembodied creatures who only know how to reason—to appraise and calculate our self-interest—and have forgotten how to feel.

These 1790s critiques are often epistemological in form, but political in substance and force. Long before Derrida, they were doing a form of deconstruction. The first critique deconstructs the idea of "nature," the second does the same for "man." The desire to take modern ideas apart, in a way that will reveal their bad faith and inner bankruptcy, is one of the marks of the cultural enterprise that we now call postmodernism.

The first great surge of postmodern energy came at a moment that marked both the heyday of Romanticism, and the dawn of the European right wing. The first postmodern intellectuals turned all their scorn, wit, and rage against such 1790s revolutionary myths as human unity, autonomy, equality. Did they find nothing problematical in the 1790s reactionary myths of traditional "community," which celebrated kingdoms where every person supposedly had a secure place, and where gracious ruling classes treated their subjects like family? It's hard to believe. Read a writer like Coleridge, say, or Schelling, and you find a power of spirit that can see into and see through everything. But look at their political lives, and you see how they truncated themselves more effectively than any guillotine could have done.[4]

The selective blindness of deconstruction in its youth helped to protect landlords and bosses, dukes and kings against the pressures of the people they were crushing. Postmoderns of today, so vigilant about everyone else's genealogies, tend to be coy about their own. Isn't it time they had the guts to look their ancestors in the face? I don't think their genealogy invalidates their work. But it does give them a lot of explaining to do.

Rights and Wrongs in the Nineteenth Century

3. Here is Karl Marx in the 1840s, in his essay "On the Jewish Question." He is arguing that the Rights of Man offers modern men and women too little: "Let us notice first of all that the so-called rights of man, as distinct from the rights of the citizen, are simply the rights of a member of civil society, that is, of egoistic man separated from other men and from the community....withdrawn into himself, wholly preoccupied with his private interest, and acting in accord with his private caprice." The rights of man fit men for life in a brutal society without any sense of community or citizenship. The Declaration is like a diploma that certifies fitness to serve in a war of each against all.

4. Here is Dostoevsky, in his "Legend of the Grand Inquisitor," folded into *The Brothers Karamazov* and published in 1881 just after his death: "You are going into the world with some promise of freedom which men, in their simplicity and their unruliness, cannot even understand, and which they fear and dread—since nothing has ever been more unsupportable for a man and a human society than freedom.....Now, today, people are persuaded that they are freer than ever, yet they have brought their freedom to us and humbly laid it at our feet....They will wail to us: we are coming back to you, save us from ourselves!" If Marx protests that the Rights of Man give us too little, Dostoevsky's Inquisitor complains they are too much.

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Marx is writing in the 1840s, after the rights of 1789 have had a couple of generations to unfold. Half a century after the Bastille, wealth and capital are expanding at a spectacular pace, overwhelming everybody who has no capital, and threatening to reduce the rights of man to a travesty. Marx urges workers to organize against modern bourgeois society, but he attacks that society from a modern point of view. He imagines the rights of man in a more complex and deeper way than anybody imagined them before. His idea is not to abolish modern values, but to fulfill them. He agrees with Hegel's dictum, "The principle of the modern world is freedom of subjectivity." The capitalist economy nourishes that freedom, but then destroys it—not only for the workers, but even for the bourgeoisie (whom Marx describes as "comfortable in their alienation"). Marx dreams of communism as a society where people can fulfill themselves as both men and citizens, and where "the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all."

With the Grand Inquisitor, we are getting close to the end of the century. Revolutions have started, and mobilized great popular support, but have everywhere met defeat. Still, European and American workers have learned how to organize, and a mass labor movement has come into being. But militant chauvinism and xenophobia are growing in waves; some people fear, and others hope, that the waves will sweep everything else away. Now all the great nations of Europe (plus Japan; the United States will take a little longer) have mass armies manned by the draft, and huge stocks of heavy artillery, conceived by modern scientists and built by the modern working class. Europe has been at peace for decades, but the trip that will lead to August 1914 is well under way.

Marx, a modernist socialist, believed that modern men and women, living lives that were partly free and partly repressed, wanted deep down to be completely free. (Thus the workers' desire for freedom would drive them to revolt against a repressive society and state.) Dostoevsky's Inquisitor makes a radically opposite argument: what these divided selves really crave is to be completely repressed. This character is postmodern in a stronger sense than those of critiques 1 and 2. He doesn't share their doubts that human rights are coherent or meaningful. He even thinks that deep down they are correct. But he believes modern times are tragic: modern freedom and subjectivity are psychologically unbearable for most of the people they were meant for. It's bearable for *him*, he thinks, *he* can take it; but he is convinced that *they* can't. So he tries to construct new forms of life for them, life forms that will make them happy by preventing them from developing, by protecting them from themselves. These forms make up the Inquisitorial trinity of "miracle, mystery and authority." (The Inquisitor's trinitarian form could also be a parody of the French revolutionary—and modernist—trinity of "liberty, equality, fraternity.") The masses are modern, just as Marx said they were, so they won't feel at home with prerevolutionary traditions or feudal hierarchies: they will need new ones. Dostoevsky underlines the artificially constructed character of these new norms and the profound contempt for people that underlies them. The Grand Inquisitor proclaims a radically modern vision of the right, liberated from all feudal and traditional loyalties, disenchanted in its vision of life, determined to rule the world by mind control. Maybe we should call it a modernism of lies.

Did Dostoevsky himself share this vision? I doubt it. Remember, he defines his Inquisitor as the mortal enemy of Jesus Christ, and never, not even in his most transgressive moments, was Dostoevsky ready to curse Jesus Christ. But he was an exemplary modern intellectual, determined, as Nietzsche put it, to "live dangerously," to flirt with every idea that terrified him, to build his house under the volcano.

The 1890s: The Disappearance of Rights

"This was a post-revolutionary conservatism," wrote Thomas Mann, "a revolt against liberal standards not from the rear but from the front, not from the old but from the new."[5] The Grand Inquisitor may be the first spokesman of the "conservative revolution." A generation and a war later, this movement recruited Heidegger, Carl Schmitt, Ezra Pound, Céline, and made fascism intellectually chic. But a surprisingly similar perspective can be found on the left of the 1890s, in the enormously influential thought of Georges Sorel. For a de-

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cade or more, Sorel expounded an intensely dramatic form of Marxism, which he called "social poetry." He believed, like the Inquisitor, that the basis of political life was myth. In his Marxist phase, his organizing myth was the general strike: this idea, he said, would fill the masses with religious zeal (Sorel romanticized the Crusades) and make them explode like a bomb. But the bomb failed to go off; Sorel gradually lost faith in the working classes, and embraced *la nation*, the belligerent and xenophobic modern nation-state, as his ideal revolutionary subject. He became Mussolini's spiritual guru, and led a whole generation of radicals from socialism to fascism.[6]

Both the left and the right of the 1890s polarized political life into masses and elites: the avant-garde elites create myths, the masses either reject them or act them out. If the masses are happy with the myths of the postmodern right, they will go down on their knees; if they are happy with the myths of the postmodern left, they will go out in the streets. Around the turn of the century, France's anti-Dreyfusard mobs introduced an ominous new synthesis: people going out in the streets to fight for the right to go down on their knees.

If we compare the political culture of the 1890s with that of the 1790s, we find that the vision of the people seizing power and proclaiming its rights has virtually faded away. In the 1890s images of people are deterministic to the point of fatalism. In bourgeois democracies, we find competing visions of people as products of their social status, or of their religion, or of their ethnicity, or of their nationality. Now, too, for the first time, there are mass movements that reduce people to products of race. Marxism in the 1890s has devolved into images of people who are pure products of their class, and who tread a conveyor belt to a revolution that is historically inevitable. (Lenin and Rosa Luxemberg, opponents in so many ways, were allies in the attempt to rescue Marxism from fatalism and keep the idea of subjective freedom and agency alive.) If we look at the culture of *fin-de-siecle* physical science—remember, this is before Einstein and Heisenberg—we find a metaphysics of total fatalism, with individuals helpless before inexorable cosmic laws. If we look at emerging social science, we find a composite image: people may be products of this force or of that one, or of many forces at a time, but *products* is what they are.[7]

Given the profound passivity in all these images of modern man, it shouldn't be surprising that the idea of human rights all but disappeared. There was no place on this political spectrum for a vision of people as free subjects who are ready to fight for their rights, who come together and make a social contract to create a community, and who see politics as an arena for human beings to become who they are. At the end of the nineteenth century, there is a great abundance of visions of modern people as objects—objects of the state, of the world economy, of their class, of their ethnicity or race. There's hardly anyone around who tries to imagine these men and women as subjects.

And yet, while the ideas of human autonomy and human rights were losing resonance at the center of the Western world, people at the margins of modern society were learning to embrace them. Wherever marginal people awakened and aroused themselves—in subjugated nations (think of India, of China) or peoples deprived of nationality (Serbs, Croats, Arabs, Jews), in enslaved or dominated races (the African National Congress, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People), in the dominated but increasingly assertive female sex, in the labor unions of the exploited and oppressed working class—the idea of human rights was crucial to their collective self-awareness and to the demands they made on the world. Even as the rights of man were being rejected as a *passé* embarrassment in the West, they were becoming a beacon to the future for insulted and injured people around the world.

(Nevertheless, in all marginal movements, cosmopolitan identities and demands for recognition of human rights have had to fight against aggressive denials of shared humanity and strident contempt for the rights of all outsiders. The women's movement, the labor movement, the black movement, all have suffered when they have isolated themselves, all have thrived when they have brought it home to other people that their fight is everybody's fight.

The Russian Revolution is tragic in the way it at once embraced and expanded human rights, then denied and destroyed them.[8] The inner contradic-

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tions of Russia in 1905 and 1917 have exploded in dozens of revolutions and new regimes, all through the twentieth century, all around the world. They have never been overcome.)

The Twentieth Century: Escape from Escapes from Freedom

The early twentieth century, the golden age of modernism, was one of the most explosively creative periods in history. In science, in literature, drama, painting, music, architecture, not only did the old genres thrive extravagantly, but new cultural forms were invented and flourished—cinema, psychoanalysis, electronics, jazz, genetics, modern dance. But the tremendous surges of human energy and imagination that marked the culture of those years weren't working in politics. In Russia, they worked erratically: a revolutionary era that began with the creation of *soviets*, an authentically new democratic form, ended with their conversion into bureaucratic machines—"transmission belts," as Stalin said—for the burial of democracy. In Western Europe, they worked negatively. Europe's political imagination in the modernist age created two monstrous new political forms: the world war and the fascist movement.

The first striking thing about World War I was what Freud, writing early in 1915, called "the mobilization of the mind."[9] Millions of people, including people who had been working for universal goals, demonized each other overnight. The next striking thing is that, although generals, politicians and millions of citizens knew as early as September 1914 that the armies were evenly matched and the war as it was could not be won—it was only the entrance of the United States that tipped the balance—they kept on sacrificing their sons and themselves, two million, five million, ten million, more.

Fascist movements sprang into being virtually overnight at the war's end. They picked up explosive strength and momentum, mobilized millions of followers, overwhelmed liberal republics, smashed everything in their path, and performed horrifying demonstrations of "total power." (The word "totalitarian," a form of abuse after the military defeat of fascism, was a badge of honor for fascism in its prime.) Fascists flaunted their brutality theatrically, to show that they felt no common humanity with their victims, that they had the strength (so they called it) to triumph over conscience, and to stomp out the sentimental feeling that all people matter and all deserve respect and care.

Fascism pushed forward in what seemed an inexorable march. To many people, it looked like "the wave of the future" (Anne Lindbergh on Nazi Germany), destined to conquer and rule the world. A striking aspect of fascist triumphalism was its reserve army of fellow travelers—often the most educated and cultured people—who only yesterday were democratic citizens, but who today, just like the Inquisitor's clientele, were thrilled to be relieved of their burden of freedom ("the great anxiety and terrible agony they now endure") and told what to do. Some of these born-again fascists were even great modern artists: Emil Nolde, Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis, Céline.

Fascism's eruptive power was a surprise. The next surprise was that fascism didn't conquer the world, after all. It was finally defeated, at a vast human cost, partly by nations that, even where they oppressed their peoples, left them basically free (the United States, the United Kingdom), and partly by nations that, when they enslaved their peoples, betrayed their promise of freedom (USSR). It turned out not only that a collective escape from freedom doesn't make people (or peoples) invulnerable, but that the experience of living through a partial and messy freedom, a freedom oozing with inner contradictions, might make modern men and women even stronger. World War II helped millions of ordinary neurotic non-supermen to believe in themselves.

The Late Twentieth Century: Human Rights Comes Back

After democracy's triumph over the most radical denial of humanity and human rights, the idea of universal rights took on a new force. This idea is crystallized in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and again in the Helsinki Charter of 1975. Post-World War II ideas of human rights have inspired an amazing variety of political initiatives, from the popular civil rights movement and the great decisions of the Warren Court in the United States to such opposition movements in Eastern Europe as Charter 77, KOR, Solidarity,

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the Civic Forum, and militant democratic movements throughout the Soviet bloc, to years of anti-military resistance all over Latin America, to the great demonstrations in Tiananmen Square in Beijing in 1989. Martin Luther King, Jr., Martin Buber, Nelson Mandela, Andrei Sakharov, Fang Lizhi, Vaclav Havel, have all made their marks in this struggle. That Mandela, who is both a liberal and a Communist, should take power peacefully in a South Africa that is both multiracial and democratic—even a decade ago, who would have dreamt it?—is a thrilling victory, not just for blacks, and not just for South Africans, but for people. The thrill felt around the world shows the desire of late-twentieth-century people to identify with each other, to conceive themselves as part of something bigger, to demand that they should all be recognized as human beings.

It was uncanny that what may have been our century's greatest victories for human rights came in the revolution's bicentennial year, 1989. Ironically, the political culture of East European dissidence, so often penetrating and profound, on this occasion was out to lunch. Vaclav Havel, for instance (but many others as well), has often said: Who, us? Why call *us* revolutionary? Can't you see that we're *against* revolutions, we think Prometheus was a villain, we only favor modesty, we just want to let things *be*? Maybe Havel wanted to illustrate Nietzsche's idea of "creative forgetting," or maybe to show us his mastery as an ironist as well as a revolutionary. Maybe the force of his image, "Velvet Revolution," is to incorporate self-irony into revolutionary life. If so, it is a noble *fin de siècle* bequest to revolutionaries to come.

Today's idea of human rights is clearly modeled on the idea chartered by Lafayette and Jefferson two hundred years ago. But there are important differences.

First of all, contemporary thinkers have assimilated Marx's critique of "modern bourgeois society" (Critique #3). It is now pretty well understood (it was incorporated into the UDHR) that economic survival is as basic a right as there can be. But that right cannot be secured where men and women are locked in an economic war of each against all. So the state must free its citizens from fear of starvation or violent death, and work actively to ensure their survival. If a state doesn't take care of its people's material needs, it loses legitimacy. Enemies of the Communist states in the 1980s would have been surprised to learn—a few, but it seems only a few, got it, and got the joke—that one of their strongest critiques was Marxist in inspiration.

Next, eighteenth-century revolutionaries rooted their rights in a Newtonesque idea of eternal nature. Critics immediately asked, So how come these eternal rights never got proclaimed until right here and right now (Critique #1)? People who talk about rights today have no faith in eternal nature. Their idea of rights is rooted in *history*, in concrete historical experiences shared by people and peoples all over the world. These include

1. the long-term development of the world market, of what Adam Smith and Hegel called "civil society," in which commodities and money form a language that enables—but also forces—people all over the world to talk;

2. an increasingly free flow of peoples, which enables—but also, sometimes, forces—a very large proportion of people in the world to migrate, and sometimes to keep moving;

3. the development of a world culture, arising out of the world market just as Marx (in the *Manifesto*) said it would, integrated through networks of global mass media and information technology;

4. a dreadful but remarkably successful fight against fascism, that is, against the most virulent racist denials of human identity and assaults on human rights;

5. the universal menace of nuclear weapons and nuclear war, and the spontaneous emergence of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) around the world, to campaign for nuclear disarmament and peace;

6. an integrated, fully global environment, subject to imbalances and possible global catastrophes, and an international campaign, led by NGOs but often incorporated into state agendas, against environmental deterioration and disaster;

7. an open sexual environment where, increasingly, any man or woman can form sexual bonds with any other, leading to children and new families, but also to infection and death; under the pressures of this environment, a global norm of "reproductive rights" comes into being and makes sense.

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All through the nineteenth century, critics of 1789 argued that the idea of humanity was abstract and "artificial," while ethnic and national and sexual identities were immediate and "natural" (Critique #2). If there is one thing we have learned in the twentieth century, it is that these particularist identities are just as artificial, as arbitrary, as elaborately constructed, as the universalist identity of "man." One of the best recent books about modern nationalism is by Benedict Anderson, a student of East Asia, and we can learn a lot from his title alone: *Imagined Communities*.[10] We seem to understand, a lot better than we did, that our particularistic identities grow not from blood and soil or DNA or any other inexorable "bedrock" reality, but from human imagination, from people's minds, whose operations are universal and can be critically scrutinized and shared. Once we get this, we have come a long way toward an identity that is inclusively human.

I've been arguing that human rights is the fundamental modernist idea, and that in recent history it has been deepened and renewed. After the horrors of two world wars and a cold war, Europe and North America have had a chance to feel what peace and prosperity could be like. Through mass media, ordinary people have seen and heard more than ever before of how other people live; they have seen other people's faces up close, and seen their suffering. It has become harder than ever to believe in the mutual impermeability and isolation of people who come from different places, or speak different tongues, or have different skins. Just as ideas like "world literature" and "world music" have become matter-of-fact realities today, it now makes sense to talk about a world "public opinion," even though this opinion rarely has the power to make the world stop, or make it turn in a new way. Jürgen Habermas, the most serious theorist of human rights today, argues that the philosophical basis for human rights is "intersubjective communication." Our mass media convey stereotyped and twisted perceptions, and yet, for all that, still make it possible for real intersubjective communication to go on.

In the last part of our century, Habermas and other supporters of human rights have their most serious arguments with what we might call the postmodern left. These people are supporters of "identity politics," and of "new social movements"—black, women's, gay, environmental, and so on—that have mostly developed since the 1960s. To the extent this group has had a theoretical leader, it was Michel Foucault. Foucault raged with ferocious contempt against liberal politics and ideas—he often sounded a lot like Sorel—against the Enlightenment, the idea of humanity, and all modern thought and culture, which he reduced to just a bunch of "mechanisms of social control." Foucault and his followers and foreign legions disparage all the so-called "normal" people outside their chosen groups for our hopeless otherness. Still, they keep demanding empathy, and recognition, and *rights,* just as if we belonged together to a humanity that they insist cannot exist. And deep down their demands are right, if only they knew.

Many people, movements, and governments are still trying to smash the rights of man. But it will be harder today than it was two centuries ago, because the idea of human rights today is far more historically grounded and concrete, attuned to experiences that so many people around the world really go through and desires they really feel.

In the 1790s, critics of human rights argued that the subject of these rights was assumed to exist in an eternal realm outside history. By the 1990s, the idea of human rights has been around, and has developed a complex history of its own. Now believers in human rights speak from inside the whale; they engage history from within a history all of us share.

Late twentieth-century ideas of human rights have evolved in a context of desperate world cri-

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ses; they constitute a response to these crises, and a hope of a way to work through them. The twentieth century has overflowed with horrors, but at last it has produced millions of people who feel affinity and empathy, and who want to reach each other through the flames. The anthem of America's civil rights movement in the 1960s was a transformed version of an old Protestant hymn: "We Shall Overcome." People who believe in human rights now recognize how much there is to overcome, but also how to say "we."

In Chicago today there is an excellent magazine called the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*. It was founded in 1945 by tormented men and women who had worked on the Bomb. On its cover every month, there is an image of a clock, ticking and close to midnight. For years, all through the cold war, for most of my life, that clock read 11:55. In the mid-1980s, in the days of perestroika and the SALT II treaty, the editors tentatively set the clock back to 11:50. When the Berlin Wall came down in 1989, they set it back a little more; it's way back at 11:43 today, an amazing advance. This is the historical context that drives the idea of human rights at the end of the twentieth century: a shared awareness that we're all in it together, that we're living close to midnight, and that human actions can make a difference and give us all more time. □

Notes

[1] *The Post-Modern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, 1979, translated by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, Introduction by F.W. Jameson (Minnesota, 1984). Alas, Lyotard's elegant *"grande histoire"* is rendered klunkily as "metanarrative."

[2] This idea of authenticity implies an antithesis, *alienation*, a situation where people appear to be acting freely, but in fact are not. Rousseau's *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality* explored the ways in which people could "alienate" their natural rights, that is, consciously or unconsciously give them away: "They ran headlong to their chains, thinking thereby to preserve their liberty." Jefferson and Madison understood this chronic danger, and tried to combat it by conceptualizing rights that would be "inalienable." Marx (along with many other nineteenth-century thinkers, including the great Romantic poets) argued that, even in liberal states where basic human rights were recognized, self-alienation was built into the deeper structures of work, economic exchange, and everyday life. But the alienation was not total: modern men and women could still recognize what was happening to them and fight to overcome it.

[3] The Dreyfus Affair, only a few years later, would bring out the revolutionary principles again. Jean Jaurès played a central role in making clear the connection between the 1789 revolution, the rights of citizenship in 19th-century bourgeois democracy, and the fight for a socialist future. But the Dreyfus Affair also brought out the explosive power of racist mass politics and its capacity to wreck democracy.

[4] Think of Blake, of Shelley, of Buechner, of Stendhal, and it is obvious that I have badly oversimplified Romanticism here. But the radical promise of Romanticism has erupted only at intervals—the 1840s, the 1890s, the 1910s, the 1960s. More often, Romantic insight and imagination have been conscripted into a longstanding *Kulturkampf* against the rights of man.

[5] Thomas Mann, *Doctor Faustus*, 1947, translated by Harriet Lowe-Porter, 1949 (Penguin, 1968), pp. 352-3. For a few years, during World War I, Mann identified himself with this "conservative revolution." (See especially his wartime *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man*.) After Mann had extracted himself from its grip, he wrote about it brilliantly in *The Magic Mountain* and *Doctor Faustus*.

[6] On this transition, see Zeev Sternhill's excellent study, *The Birth of Fascist Ideology* (Princeton, 1995).

[7] Here is Max Weber in 1905, at the end of his *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, lighting into the people of his time: "Specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart, a nonentity caught in the delusion that it has reached a level of development never before achieved by mankind."

[8] Dostoevsky's writings were banned in Stalin's USSR, but he was venerated as a classic after Stalin's death. Then critics were allowed to point out that, from a Soviet perspective, the Grand Inquisitor's prophecy can be read as a premature manifesto for Leninism.

[9] Sigmund Freud, "Thoughts for the Times on War and Death," reprinted in *Collected Papers*, Vol. 4 (Basic Books, 1959), pp. 288-317. This sad but marvelous essay predicts that the war will end only in a way that will generate an even greater, more lethal war.

[10] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Verso, 1983).

[11] See especially, Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, 1985, translated by Frederick Lawrence (MIT, 1987).

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Elizabeth Kiss

ALCHEMY OR FOOL'S GOLD?

Assessing Feminist Doubts About Rights

Should rights play an important role in feminist theory and practice? The answer to this question is not as simple as it first appears, for contemporary feminism has a profoundly ambiguous relationship to rights. On the one hand, so many feminist goals have been and continue to be expressed as demands for rights that their central role seems assured. Women claim rights, for example, to full participation in political, professional, and economic life; to control over their reproductive lives; and to gender equality within marriage. Rights have figured prominently in the rhetoric of the women's movement from the beginning, even if the line of descent has not been smooth: feminists have had to rebel against the Fathers of rights theory, who preached the equal dignity of all while systematically denying it to most. Nevertheless, struggles by women to vindicate rights have changed the social world, altering relationships, practices, and institutions, and affecting the way innumerable women perceive themselves. Small wonder, then, that some theorists have ascribed a transformative power to rights, a power Patricia Williams recently likened to alchemy.[1]

Contemporary Anglo-American feminist theory, on the other hand, paints a dramatically less positive picture, expressing misgivings about or even outright hostility to rights talk. I don't mean that feminist theorists deny the gains women have achieved in the last century through struggles for rights. But in looking to the future, many of them take a negative or skeptical attitude: the language of rights, they claim, cannot adequately represent women's experience; nor can it articulate the moral and political problems of greatest concern to feminists.

Indeed, the most striking aspect of feminist doubts about rights is that they come from so many otherwise disparate viewpoints. For feminism is not, of course, a unitary movement, but rather a diverse and contentious field of inquiry and action. Feminists agree on the salience of gender and on the need to overcome women's subordination. Beyond that, we disagree about almost everything—theories, histories, and strategies. Yet doubts about rights are widely shared. Feminists who embrace an "ethic of care" contrast their approach with a culturally masculine "ethic of rights." Proponents of a feminist politics of difference describe rights talk as overly abstract and impersonal. Other feminist scholars criticize rights for reflecting a selfish and atomistic view of human nature and an aggressive and conflictual view of social life; others still, for encouraging rigid, rule-bound approaches to moral and social life. Some feminist "post-structuralists" characterize rights language as inextricably bound up with hierarchies of gender and with the outdated and patriarchal fiction of a unitary self. To focus on rights, they all say, is to abandon an effective commitment to women's emancipation.

Are feminist critics of rights right? Or do they misjudge rights, or misunderstand their value for women? I will divide my response to these questions into three parts. The first two concern critiques of the concept of rights—of the images of self and society legitimated by rights and of the role of rights within political and moral argument. In the third part, I will turn to feminist concerns about their practical value.

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Connections and Boundaries

The most common feminist criticism of rights is the charge that they entail an undesirable vision of self and society. Rights talk, Nancy Hirschmann has argued in a recent example of this view, provides a language of "distrust and competition" rather than of "relationship." As rights-bearers "we are separated . . . from each other" so that "to respect a person's rights is to keep one's distance from her."[2] Rights define us as bounded selves requiring protection from the encroachments of others, who threaten our autonomy and integrity. The concept implies a moral absolutism in which the self is unencumbered by obligations to others; it legitimates aggressive selfishness and denies community. As Simone Weil complained half a century ago, rights produce a "shrill clamor of claims and counter-claims."[3]

Arguments like these lead some feminists to conclude that the moral vision of self and society associated with the concept of rights is characteristically masculine, morally unattractive, or both. Echoing Carol Gilligan's influential contrast between two moral voices, the first expressing an "ethic of care," the second an "ethic of rights," critics contrast a feminist (or feminine) self, connected to others, with a rights-bearing self, which is (or at least thinks it is) separate from others. It is no coincidence, they suggest, that Joel Feinberg, in his well-known essay "The Nature and Value of Rights," wrote that "Having rights enables us to 'stand up like men,' to look others in the eye, and to feel in some fundamental way the equal of anyone."[4] Women, these critics suggest, shouldn't strive to "stand up like men." In a few cases, feminist theorists portray the dangers of rights talk in more apocalyptic tones: the rights-bearing person is self- destructive and lives in a socially fragmented world that threatens to collapse into a "Kafkaesque nightmare of solitary individuals."[5]

This feminist critique equates the concept of a right with a claim to noninterference. In doing so it ignores the complexity and range of the idea. The guarantee to be left alone, free of interference from others, is certainly a central image of what it means to have a right. It is particularly associated with the classical liberal triad of life, liberty, and property. But it does not fit many traditional liberal rights such as rights to vote, to a fair trial, to marry or divorce, to form associations, or to enter contracts. These kinds of rights disappear from view in feminist critiques, which therefore ignore the ways in which rights express and institutionalize not only abstract and conflictual but also concrete and cooperative values. There is nothing isolating about a right to vote. Indeed, as Martha Minow has argued, the very act of ascribing rights to someone implies a moral connection to them. Rights define a community; inclusion in that community means that my interests, aspirations, and vulnerabilities matter.

The internal complexity of rights was perhaps best captured by Wesley Hohfeld in 1919 when he noted that rights can confer *liberties, immunities, claims, and powers*. The feminist view that rights separate and protect us from others conceives rights as liberties to do as we please and immunities from interference. It entirely ignores the ways in which rights give us claims on other people and powers to alter moral and legal relationships.

To be sure, the capacity of rights talk to demarcate boundaries and revoke access is not always put to morally attractive uses. Rights talk can be used to justify selfishness, privilege, and indifference in the face of human suffering. Rights have figured prominently in moral and political arguments that downplay the extent of human interdependence and that minimize the moral claims people can make on one another. Many feminists want to criticize such views and the laissez-faire arrangements they legitimate. But there is no necessary link between the concept of rights and a substantive political position like libertarianism. Moral vocabularies do not carry a no-risk guarantee; they can always be put to a range of uses.

The conceptual critique of rights is problematic even if we recast it as an explicit argument against the liberty and immunity rights celebrated by libertarians. It fails on logical grounds because liberties and immunities typically define, rather than deny, relationships. By specifying what people can do or expect from each other, such rights transform relationships, altering their internal distribution of power. Thus the claim that wives have a socially guaranteed immunity right against coerced marital sex profoundly alters marriage: it gives wives new power and transforms them into

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something more than performers of sexual duties. But this immunity does not deny or destroy the relationship of marriage; it redefines it.

The deeper problem with the conceptual critique is that it fails to recognize the specific importance of liberty and immunity rights to women. The boundary-marking characteristic of liberties and immunities is of critical importance to society's most vulnerable members. Many struggles central to the feminist movement, such as those to repeal the laws of coverture, to make marriage consensual, and to criminalize rape and sexual harassment are efforts by women to set their own boundaries. Marilyn Frye has argued that "total powerlessness is being unconditionally accessible . . . the slave who decides to exclude the master from her hut is declaring herself not a slave."[6] Feminists who issue sweeping denunciations of rights as too abstract, individualistic, and conflictual ignore the ways in which women need precisely these kinds of rights. Vulnerable and stigmatized groups have the most to gain from the protection that "abstract and impersonal" frameworks can provide. When a woman is still struggling for "'a room of her own,'" Frances Olsen has noted, "she is unlikely to complain that rights isolate her."

In a world in which many women are continually vulnerable to abuse, especially abuse by people claiming connection to them through bonds of love, family, religion, or culture, an uncritical celebration of "connection" at the expense of "demarcation" commits a utopian fallacy. In its strongest form—where it claims or implies that women should *abandon* the language of rights—this critique is undertaken from a politically naive perspective, distant from the lives of most women.

Reasons for Skepticism

Feminist attacks on rights because of the images of self they foster operate as surrogates for a substantive critique of unattractive political views. But why have so many feminists found this overstated critique so compelling? Why, in other words, might attention to women's lives encourage skepticism toward rights?

As many feminist theorists have pointed out, the injuries and deprivations women experience because of their gender have never been adequately captured by traditional conceptions of rights. On the contrary, these conceptions have served to obscure—even to legitimate— women's injuries. The classic example is the way relationships of inequality, abuse, and exploitation within marriage have been given moral protection by liberal conceptions of the private realm. Feminists have persuasively criticized traditional understandings of the public/private distinction, stressing how politics shapes these boundaries and how oppressive power relationships persist within them.

Yet the problem, as I've argued, is not with rights as such. Many protections critical to women are best understood as liberty or immunity rights guaranteed by the state. The problem with traditional liberal or libertarian views is their tendency to cast the state as the primary rights violator, ignoring the ways in which non-state actors (for instance, employers or spouses) can threaten freedom and well-being. So we should be skeptical about arguments that claim natural, self-evident, or in some other sense final validity for any particular version of rights theory. Rights have to be assessed by whether they actually make a difference in people's lives.

Beyond Rights: Care and Other Values

A second set of feminist doubts about rights arises from a conviction that we should pay more attention to other concepts and values. Contemporary moral and political thought, on this view, is excessively dominated by a legalist and rationalist model of moral life. It ignores or underplays the importance of activities, relationships, and attitudes that have traditionally been associated with women. Feminist writers aim to correct this one-sidedness by drawing on a critical but appreciative encounter with women's lives.

This shift in focus is best exemplified by work within the ethics of care, inspired in large part by Carol Gilligan. In her influential book *In a Different Voice*, Gilligan took issue with conventional models of moral development. She described a distinctive moral voice, which spoke of caring and relationship and which, she claimed, was more commonly employed by women. Gilligan's arguments have been taken up (as well as criticized) by feminist moral and political theorists. According to them, the mainstream of contemporary ethics has ignored or underplayed the relevance of

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intimate relationships in moral life in favor of a public, rational, legislative model. In the process, personal connections, and the attentiveness and responsibility that is the first virtue of human relationships like those between parents (especially, given traditional gender roles, mothers) and children, have not received the theoretical attention they deserve. In our relationships with partners, spouses, children, and friends, we tend to regard an attitude defined by and limited to a concern for the other person's rights as morally problematic: it constitutes a failure of intimacy.

Rights talk does not capture the whole of morality. This may seem an obvious point, but it is one thing to acknowledge it and quite another to develop a rich and persuasive account of other moral concepts and values. Theorists of care have begun to do this. Their writings also provide insight into the rights project, suggesting that achieving greater respect for others requires not so much a better capacity to discern universal principles as what Annette Baier has called "a progress of sentiments."[8]

Contrary to the claims of some feminist theorists, however, the ethics of care gives us no reason to abandon rights talk. We still need general principles that tell us who should receive care, why care is important, and what distinguishes its valuable from its ineffective or dangerous forms. Affirming the moral importance of personal relationships does not resolve the hard choices about caring for intimates, fellow citizens, and strangers that political communities must face. These choices require attention to the *distribution* of care and so raise questions of justice. Not surprisingly, the most promising attempts by feminist theorists to think about the policy implications of an ethic of care have paid explicit and unapologetic attention to rights. Theories of care that ignore the ways in which intimacy can be a site of inequality, exploitation, and abuse threaten to romanticize the very relationships (like marriage and family) that feminist proponents of rights sought to criticize in the first place.

Practical Questions

The feminist objection that poses the most direct challenge to rights-focused approaches to politics is also the most concrete and practical: it claims that a rights approach fails to enable women actually to change their lives. Rights will not achieve gender justice. They appear to grant a valuable moral victory but actually help to obscure women's continuing subordination. Feminists should not "abandon women to their rights." In stark contrast to Patricia Williams's argument that rights are talismans of empowerment with a transformative potential analogous to alchemy, this objection portrays rights as instruments of abandonment with the allure of fool's gold.

To abandon someone is to be indifferent to their fate, to fail to show concern for how they fare. How can a social policy based on a defense of rights constitute a failure of concern? The argument about abandonment is, I think, complex; there are a number of distinct issues at stake. I shall indicate three ways in which rights can fail us in practice: the problem may be *definitional, strategic,* or *substantive*. The first is when rights are defined in such a way that women are systematically left out of their enjoyment or exercise. The second refers to the tendency of rights advocates to be insensitive to strategic questions about how a given right can be effectively institutionalized. And the third is exemplified by situations in which people systematically do themselves harm by exercising a right. In practice, definitional, strategic, and substantive concerns are often intertwined. But it is helpful to distinguish them because they lead to different sorts of "abandonment" and pose different challenges to rights theory and policy.

(1) Focusing on rights can be unhelpful or harmful if they are defined in ways that systematically leave women out. This can happen explicitly or implicitly. The obvious example of explicit exclusion is slavery, in which some people are singled out as objects of the rights of others. In a slave system, rights are violated when a slave escapes. Other examples of exclusionary definitions are laws that once gave husbands automatic rights over their wives' property and prevented married women from owning property in their own right. Another example is the marital exception to rape laws, which makes it impossible for a husband to be charged with raping his wife.

In these cases it seems obvious that a (revisionist) concern with rights is precisely what is

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necessary: women must be legally recognized as having the right to own property and to consent (or not) to sexual intercourse. What is needed, in other words, is a redefinition of rights.

But the rights critique that I am exploring is formulated as an injunction against abandoning women *to* their rights. The problem is not that the women do not have the rights in question but that having them is unhelpful. This may be the case if a right is defined in a way that, despite apparent gender neutrality, excludes women—for example, a medical insurance plan that supposedly offers equal coverage for male and female workers but then excludes pregnancy-related expenses. Another example: self-defense laws that require a proportionality of force that is unrealistic in cases of unequal physical strength. Rights to equal opportunity may also be biased by gender neutral requirements that systematically exclude women, such as minimum height rules for certain jobs. Again, the challenge is to redefine rights and rules so that they are no longer exclusionary in their effects. The solution to these problems is more thinking about rights rather than less.

(2) Rights-based approaches can also abandon those they are supposed to help when they ignore crucial strategic issues about how rights can be made effective. There are at least three ways in which this can occur: first, formal equality of rights can obscure real inequalities that make it difficult or even impossible for those in less powerful positions to exercise their rights. This is the classic critique articulated with elegant irony by Anatole France: "The law, in its majesty, grants rich and poor alike an equal right to sleep under bridges." Women (like other disadvantaged groups) may have formally equal rights in the labor market but be doomed, through inequalities of wealth, education, and influence, and the invidious effects of prejudice and harassment, to lower status jobs. The gap between legal principle and practice can work the other way, too. As Kim Scheppele has argued, some West European legal systems appear to limit abortion severely, but in practice early abortions are easy to obtain. By contrast, the post-*Roe* United States affords constitutional protection for early abortions, but these have become increasingly difficult to obtain in many parts of the country.[9]

Second, a right may be vitiated or at least seriously weakened if the procedures or strategies associated with claiming it, and in particular for demanding redress when it has been violated, are themselves ineffective, intimidating, or degrading. Soviet-style legal systems provided extreme examples of this phenomenon, guaranteeing rights in the Constitution and then vitiating them through statutory clauses that required that they be exercised "in accordance with socialist values"—which, in effect, made illegal any exercise of a right in opposition to the ruling party. Less dramatic examples of this phenomenon are depressingly common. Legal and administrative procedures for claiming redress can be costly, can further victimize the victim, can enmesh victims in intimidating professional-client relationships. By focusing on individual litigation, they can also privatize and narrow claims of harm in ways that obscure the larger structural inequalities at the root of the problem. Formal procedures for dealing with rape, gender discrimination, and sexual harassment exhibit many of these features.

Third, rights strategies may concentrate on attaining ex post facto redress for violation or neglect of rights rather than on the forms of mobilization required to prevent the violation or neglect in the first place. This is also a form of abandonment, since the harm has already occurred by the time the rights strategy kicks in. Moreover, successful redress may be so indirect that it is not experienced as helpful by the person who was harmed.

Taken together, these three examples reveal how rights strategies can abandon those they are supposed to help by ignoring the social and political changes required to make rights effective. But they do not demonstrate the futility of rights as such. The lesson to be drawn from these examples is that we should conceive of rights not as commodities the law grants us, but as relationships to be established and secured.

(3) More complex problems about rights and abandonment are raised by what I have called substantive issues. Sometimes people harm themselves in exercising their rights. Of course, any moral system that values personal autonomy has to accept that people will make mistakes. A commitment to freedom means letting people make their *own* mistakes. But widespread harmful exer-

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cises of a right may reflect deeper moral problems within a society.

A number of complex but important feminist issues fall into this category. For instance, women make uncoerced decisions in wealthy Western societies to starve themselves so as to attain a waif-like look. Their choices are heavily influenced, of course, by advertising and the media—but this doesn't alter the fact that they are choices. And yet the effects of these choices are clearly harmful and even, occasionally, deadly. Another example is the widespread voluntary use by women of implants for breast enlargement to "cure" the "problem" that plastic surgeons call "micromastia" (small breast size). Women who opt for breast implants are clearly exercising a right over their bodies. But the fact that an estimated 1.6 million women in the United States have chosen to enlarge their breasts for cosmetic reasons is troubling from a feminist perspective.

The issue is contextual. I can imagine a society with greater gender equality than ours in which men and women would change the shape of their body parts to please themselves and their loved ones, just as people change their hair styles. What is problematic about current practices of breast enlargement (beyond the health risks these procedures may entail) is what they reveal about women's judgments of their own worth and social value—and so about the gendered nature of self-respect in our society.

More urgent are those cases in which hierarchies and vulnerabilities of gender combine with those of class, culture, and race to constrain women's hopes and dreams in ways that are self-limiting and even self-destructive. Voluntary pregnancy by very young women who want to become mothers because they see this as the one positive accomplishment available to them (despite the fact that early parenthood is likely to limit their opportunities) provides a poignant example.

Addressing such issues requires continued efforts to widen women's private and public opportunities and rights. But there is another dimension to these cases that is not, I think, well captured by rights talk. The contemporary vernacular of rights combines a commitment to moral equality with a complex set of normative relationships—liberties, immunities, claims, and powers—designed to make that equality possible. But rights cannot, by themselves, answer the question of what equality means and requires. Rights don't provide us with the capacity to critically scrutinize our assumptions, or the ability to imagine and pursue better things. Feminists must also address substantive moral and cultural questions about women's (and men's) aspirations and desires, their sense of what is good and what can give meaning to their lives.

Feminism represents a profound cultural criticism and a radical dream, a dream of a world that has overcome women's social subordination. In their efforts to articulate this critique and to realize this dream, feminists need to confront issues that transcend the realm of rights. But it is misguided and dangerous for them to turn their back on rights in the process. □

Notes

[1] Patricia Williams, *The Alchemy of Race and Rights* (Harvard University Press, 1991).

[2] Nancy Hirschmann, *Rethinking Obligation* (Cornell University Press, 1992), pp. 232, 286.

[3] Simone Weil, *Selected Essays: 1934-1943*, ed. Richard Rees (Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 21.

[4] Joel Feinberg, "The Nature and Value of Rights," *Rights, Justice, and the Bounds of Liberty* (Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 151.

[5] Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Feminism Without Illusions* (University of North Carolina Press, 1991), p. 32.

[6] Marilyn Frye, *The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory* (Freedom, California: The Crossing Press, 1983), pp. 103-4.

[7] Frances Olsen, "Statutory Rape: A Feminist Critique of Rights Analysis," *University of Texas Law Review* 387 (1984).

[8] Annette Baier, "Hume, the Women's Moral Theorist?" in Eva Kittay and Diana Meyers, eds., *Women and Moral Theory* (Rowman and Littlefield, 1987), p. 40.

[9] Kim Lane Scheppele, "Constitutionalizing Abortion," paper presented to the American Political Science Association, Chicago, September 1992, p. 3.

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David Plotke

AGAINST GOVERNMENT

The Contract With America

As I write, in the summer of 1995, we do not know how many of the measures proposed in the Republican Contract With America will finally become law. But whatever the final legislative result, the Contract With America has already been a strikingly effective move in a campaign to restore Republican dominance in American national politics.[1]

The Contract With America was presented by Republican House candidates on September 27, 1994. It has three parts. The first promises voters that Republican members of the House will do their best to enact it. The second lists proposed changes in the conduct of House business. The third outlines ten legislative goals focused on cutting taxes, balancing the federal budget, and reducing the federal role in social welfare provision. The full text of the Contract takes up only six pages in a book of the same title published by the Republican National Committee.[2]

The Contract made only a modest contribution to the Republican electoral victory in 1994. House Republicans made a serious effort to give the congressional election a national character and to focus it on the Contract. Clearly at that time many people had never heard of it. It is likely that only a very small part of the electorate voted Republican because they had read and approved it. But there is some indication that it helped to convince voters that House Republicans were serious and capable. Moreover, the Democratic leadership took the Contract With America seriously. They saw its formulation as a Republican error that provided an opportunity for a counterattack linking Republican candidates, the Contract, and the record of the Reagan administrations.[3]

The process of formulating the Contract, obtaining signatures, and then taking the relevant measures through the House in 1995 has brought about a high level of unity among Republicans, which has in turn encouraged disunity among Democrats. Large numbers of House Democrats have voted for measures linked with the Contract. House Republicans have taken the political initiative and House Democrats have failed to find a counter-strategy.

The Contract has also helped to shift the terms of public debate to the right. The main debate is now over how to separate the reasonable from the excessive in the Republican proposals. The premise, evident in debate in Congress and elsewhere about the austerity budgets proposed in the House and Senate, is that cutting back the federal government is a good thing in principle and only needs to be restrained by pragmatic concerns. This premise has not even been put in question by two critiques of the right and the far right: exposés of Pat Robertson's loony and anti-Semitic view of modern history; and efforts to link the militarized far right with what is now the mainstream antistatist Republicanism of Newt Gingrich.

Finally, the Contract With America has further weakened the Clinton presidency. During and after the 1994 election, his lack of political initiative has been notable. That passivity worsens his dilemma. If he attacks specific elements of it, he seems to be taking unpopular political positions; If he ignores it or seeks to accommodate its proposals, he seems to offer more evidence of his weakness. Either way Republican chances in 1996 improve.

All this makes the Contract one of the most successful national political initiatives of recent years. Efforts to deny this on the left have focused on the modest level of public knowledge of the document before the November election, the low

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turnout in that election, and the uncertain prospects of particular bills drawn up to implement the Contract. But one should not think that Republican successes are illusory or contingent on the final result of particular legislative battles. Their successes are dynamic and ongoing, as public debate shifts to the right and antistatism gains strength.[4]

Does the Contract mark a political break? Its supporters see it both as a radical shift and as continuous with the last decade's national politics. Democrats made a telling error in the fall of 1994 when they sought to damage the Contract by linking it to Reagan. They thought—and perhaps still think—that Clinton's defeat of Bush marked the end of a phase of Republican domination and meant both a rejection of Reaganism and a turn toward a (New) Democratic alternative. Republicans have shown a much better grasp of the political moment. Bush's failure was not politically decisive, but opened a phase of political combat about whether to renew Republican domination or replace it with something else. The Contract With America is both a way to extend the unfinished "Reagan Revolution" and a project for more definitive antistatism than Reagan could implement.

Political Surprises

The Contract With America is a relatively clear and detailed program with a strong ideological content. It has been justified in terms of broad claims about American political history and national identity. It originated with the House leadership of a major political party, and after the election, measures based on it moved rapidly through the House at the initiative of an energetic and unified Republican party.

All this should come as a surprise to most analysts of contemporary politics. A large and useful literature shows why American politics tends not to be ideological, why parties are fragmented and have so much trouble maintaining unity in Congress, why parties rarely take programmatic leadership, and why the presidency is now the leading American political institution. Still other sources of conventional wisdom insist that contemporary political initiatives should proceed pragmatically, without relying on big stories about political meaning in history.

Why Success?

No six-month success story can discredit all these conceptions. But the Contract With America is *so* counter to prevalent views among analysts of parties, Congress, and American political thought as to suggest a contrary hypothesis. Perhaps accounts of the fragmentation and lack of ideas in American politics have been too much shaped by the dismal state of Democratic politics from the late 1960s on and by a widespread hostility among academics and political analysts to Republican proposals, especially those from the right of the party. Maybe the disarray of Democratic ideas and strategies does not mean that a lively, idea-driven, disciplined politics is ruled out in America. Certainly the debates in the House about bills based on proposals in the Contract have not been lacking in ideological clarity or intensity, as when Republicans propose to repeal what they call the federal welfare state of the last sixty years.

Many on the left have claimed that the evident public rejection of their ideas has occurred because American politics is immune to serious consideration of ideas of such. In this light, the Contract With America story is a provocation to familiar views, one whose results might be creative.

Why did the contract have such success? There are two sets of answers. One focuses on the political context, the other on the document itself.

With regard to context, part of the success of the Contract With America derives from a correct Republican judgment that the popular verdict on the Reagan years remains favorable. This allowed Gingrich et al. to affirm continuity—with Reagan's administrations—*and* to insist on deep change to complete the process that Reagan began.

Two other contextual factors have played a role in the Contract's success. First, the weakness of the Clinton administration provided an opening for the House Republicans. By the fall of 1994 the administration was widely perceived as not having lived up to expectations. Nor, following the failure of health care reform, did the administration have a set of policy proposals that could dominate the domestic political agenda.

Second, the Democratic House leadership was in trouble. Scandals had weakened or destroyed several important Democrats. The party leadership was politically adrift. And divisions among Demo-

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crats made it hard for Clinton to rely on their numerical advantage.

Contract or Covenant

Nothing guarantees that political opportunities will be made good. The House Republicans have made the best of their chance, in part because of the Contract With America itself. As a document—the brief manifesto provided for the election campaign, not the tedious book published later on—the Contract is compelling. It begins with an offer to voters:

> As Republican Members of the House of Representatives and as citizens seeking to join that body we propose not just to change its policies, but even more important, to restore the bonds of trust between the people and their elected representatives. That is why, in this era of official evasion and posturing, we offer instead a detailed agenda for national renewal, a written commitment with no fine print.[5]

Here the Republicans make a double pledge: to pursue a specific program and to be trustworthy. The notion of a contract also acknowledges a separation between political leaders—the "we" of the Contract—and citizens. This separation is recognized in order to declare responsibility.

By contrast, the Clinton Democratic Platform of 1992, which ends its preamble this way:

> Therefore we call for A REVOLUTION IN GOVERNMENT—to take power away from entrenched bureaucracies and narrow interests in Washington and put it back in the hands of ordinary people. ... To make this revolution we seek a NEW COVENANT to repair the damaged bond between the American people and their government, that will expand OPPORTUNITY, insist upon greater individual RESPONSIBILITY in return, restore COMMUNITY and insure NATIONAL SECURITY in a profoundly new era.[6]

Both documents propose to restore public confidence in government, but in different ways. The Contract With America offers a contract between citizens and political leaders; the Democratic Platform offers a covenant in which "ordinary people" take power. After two years of the Clinton administration, no discernible "revolution in government" was on the horizon. But if the new administration represents a covenant—a shared commitment among all citizens out of which the government expresses the popular will—there is no one to blame for this failure to achieve stated goals.[7] Or maybe we are all to blame.

The crisp, direct contractual language of the Republican document contrasts with the populist communitarianism of the Clinton Democrats who (recalling Carter) claim not so much to be responsible leaders as to be (part of) the people—in power and thus no more blameworthy than any of the rest of us if things do not go well. The Republican formulation in the Contract With America, without saying a word directly about Clinton, targets qualities that have caused him so much trouble—his ambivalent style of leadership, evasiveness, and unwillingness to take responsibility.

The Republican promise is further recommended by its modesty. It does not claim that all the measures will be enacted. Instead, Republicans propose first to use their power to change the conduct of House business and then to bring up for a vote measures that express the main elements of the Contract's proposals. They did both. Amid public skepticism about politics in the mid-1990s, proponents of the Contract benefit by taking responsibility for some things rather than proposing to make everything good happen while providing no clear standard of accountability.

Antistatism and Faith

In addition to a contractual notion of relations between political leaders and citizens the first part of the Contract contains two other main themes. It proposes that a Republican majority in the House

> will transform the way Congress works. That historic change would be the end of government that is too big, too intrusive, and too easy with the public's money. It can be the beginning of a Congress that respects the values and shares the faith of the American family.

The key theme is antistatism. Democratic statements, including the 1992 platform, blame public mistrust of government on excessive bureaucracy or bad Republican policies. The Contract takes a different stance: the problem with the government is that it is too big. Its *size* leads to intrusiveness and fiscal irresponsibility.

Here the Republicans enjoy a big advantage. Their position has the virtue of clarity. It can be linked with concrete proposals about reducing the size of government. The Democratic position calls

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for a third way between "do-nothing government" and excessive reliance on government. In the platform this third way appears mainly as a desire. It never gets a clear name or program so that one can measure results against proposals.

The Democratic Platform contains no serious discussion of any nondefense area in which the size of government will be substantially reduced. There is a pledge to eliminate obsolete programs, but no actual program is so identified. As the platform calls for many new government programs and expansion of ongoing activities, it is fair to conclude that (New) Democratic policies mean real growth in government activity. But there is deep popular suspicion of such growth. Thus the political feasibility of a Democratic course of at least modestly expanded government is bound to be in question. The prospects of such a course depend on whether those guiding it can increase efficiency and accountability so briskly that a government launching many new projects will on balance not grow much. Nothing in the Democratic Platform suggests that they have the capacity to accomplish such a difficult maneuver, and there was little in Clinton's first eighteen months to indicate otherwise.

The last phrases from the Contract cited above—proposing a Congress that "respects the values and shares the faith of the American family"—are fascinating. The separation between leaders and citizens is reaffirmed by claiming that Congress will *respect* values and share faith—not simply express them. The Contract With America does not propose to express an identity between political leaders and citizens but to represent the latter responsibly. The values of the "American family" are not spelled out in so many words. In the triumphalist book (put together after the election) that now surrounds the Contract, only two lists of principles are mentioned. The first includes individual liberty, economic opportunity, limited government, personal responsibility, and security at home and abroad. The second list is briefer: accountability, responsibility, and opportunity.

One thing that makes the Contract so effective is its lack of lists. Instead, values are embedded in the measures that Republicans propose—these values will be enacted in the project that one joins by supporting the Contract. Instead of providing a critique of social welfare policies and then considering possible reforms, the Contract proposes a Personal Responsibility Act that attacks "welfare dependency" by making it much harder to receive benefits. Against a background of open political discussion, this form is not undemocratic—it condenses values, programs, and practical measures into sharply drawn proposals that carry the force of strong arguments made at all three levels. The Contract is performative rather than preachy and didactic, and this quality separates it from most routine Republican and far right pronouncements.[8]

The closing reference to the American family's "faith" is full of meanings: American political values are a faith, they overlap with other religious faiths, and Americans are a metaphorical family who value their actual families partly as centers of faith. In less than a sentence the Contract links conservative themes about familial and religious values to its proposals without directly raising any of the divisive cultural and social questions that endanger Republican unity.

The Virtues of Exclusion

In liberal newspapers and journals, a typical account of Republican progress in the new Congress starts by acknowledging how much success has been achieved in turning Contract proposals into promising bills. The writer then suggests that such success will end soon, because Republican unity will explode when controversial social and cultural issues, notably abortion, come up for debate. The Contract contains no proposal on abortion, or gun control, or affirmative action, or prayer in school. Many have attributed Republican success to those omissions, hinting that there is something dishonest about them.

Such accounts leave several virtues of the Contract unnoticed. Its brevity is attractive. Read against the Democratic Platform it is a pleasure. That document is like one of Clinton's worst speeches, sprawling endlessly. The Democratic Platform does not distinguish core proposals from the endless number of less important good things that a decent Democratic administration might take on. The form of the Contract implies that its proponents know when to stop talking, and even suggests that such restraint signals an ability to limit the state.

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In this light, the exclusion of controversial questions from the Contract is more than craftiness. It conveys a Republican capacity to *select*, to make a short list from among many conservative concerns. Thus the exclusion of major "social issues" seemed to express discipline and responsibility, even to many advocates of conservative positions on those issues. Perhaps the religious right benefited from being on the sidelines long enough to watch the success of the Contract With America. When the Christian Coalition introduced its own legislative agenda in May 1995, it not only copied Gingrich's title by proposing a "Contract With the American Family," its leaders seem to have learned something about brevity. And they indicate a willingness to compromise—thus the antiabortion plank proposes to prohibit "only" late-term abortions. Moreover, not all so-called social or cultural issues divide Republicans and the far right. Opposition to most forms of affirmative action is a popular position that unites these forces more than it divides them, and it remains available for a national initiative beyond the various state-level campaigns now underway.

Ten Promising Proposals

What of the proposals themselves? First, they have a real shape, which derives from their central aim: to reduce the role of the state in making social decisions. The "Fiscal Responsibility Act" (a balanced budget amendment to the constitution); the "Personal Responsibility Act" (antiwelfare); the "American Dream Restoration Act" and "Senior Citizens Fairness Act" (tax cuts); the "Common Sense Legal Reforms Act" (limiting litigation); and the "Citizen Legislature Act" (term limits) would all move authority away from the state. The "Family Reinforcement Act" encourages adoption and greater parental control of education. The "Job Creation and Wage Enhancement Act" offers tax cuts for business and attacks social and economic regulation. When the other two measures—the "National Security Restoration Act" and the "Taking Back Our Streets Act"—stress national security and fighting crime, they offer predictable qualifications to the antistate emphasis. Taken as a group, the Contract's proposals would move authority and resources away from Congress, the executive, the courts, and federal agencies; they would enhance the decision-making role of the market, families, and religious and communal associations. The coherence of the Contract With America makes it easy to explain and defend, especially against critics with no clear positive alternative.

Second, the themes of the Contract With America are linked to widely shared sentiments. After the bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma City, extremist antistatism has been discovered by the national media. It deserves the attention. But the paramilitary groups are not on a political island. They represent the fringe of a broad popular mood that has flourished in the United States over the last two-and-a-half decades. This antistatism—with conservative, populist, and libertarian elements—has been a pillar of Republican power from the days of Nixon's silent majority on. Before the Contract, a large and sympathetic audience already existed for political attacks on the federal government—especially when such attacks are so well crafted and well timed.

A third strength of the Contract's proposals is that they are concrete. The text defines them as distinct legislative acts. This is not literally true; the ten proposals designate clusters of related bills, but the point is that these proposals are close to being plausible pieces of legislation. This is in striking contrast with the Democratic platform and most left-of-center declarations, which usually take the form of general statements of principles (in favor of democracy, or populism, or diversity). Regarding actual practical choices, such forms of positioning are pre-programmatic. Yet they are not vague by design. Part of their vagueness comes from efforts to paper over deep conflicts. Another part reflects the left's lack of recent experience in governing, so that broad aims have not been required to take practical form. (There is of course a further problem that I will not discuss here: much of the left is uncertain about its basic commitments.) By contrast, the proposals in the Contract With America rest on several decades of Republican efforts to combine antistatist commitments and practical governance in a society that cannot dispense altogether with a state.

Will the proposals made in the Contract With America be effective? Probably not, if the stron-

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gest version of each proposal is implemented. In this case the dire consequences that Democrats have warned about—extreme personal hardships, and a rotted out social and economic infrastructure, for example—will come to pass. Yet a practical logic is likely to benefit the proponents of the Contract. Despite the pledges of total transformation, the Contract's proposals would be most effective if implemented only in part. Given an antistatist political context, shaped by decades of Republican domination, limited further shifts in that direction might have modest positive results in the short term. For example, severe cuts in social welfare expenditures might temporarily reduce budgetary strains. Such cuts, rather than a total abolition of welfare, are apt to emerge from the legislative bargaining process. Here the Gingrich Republicans may benefit from the limits on their overall power—for the moment—while being able to blame the problems that continue to exist on the timidity of some of their allies and the obduracy of their Democratic opponents.

Where Is the Critique of Antistatism?

The success of the Contract With America raises a question: why haven't there been more effective counterarguments against its radical antistatism?

One important reason is the political and theoretical limits of the positions held by those who reject the Contract's approach. Clinton's position—that of center Democrats, New Democrats, neoliberal Democrats, however one names them—embraces a partially antistatist rhetoric while remaining committed to policies that promise no real reduction in government activity. One device for managing this tension amounts to populist and communitarian claims that a big government can be a friendly government. The other is to argue that a commitment to efficiency will offset any growth in government brought about by policy choices. But without a credible record of making the state nicer or more efficient, the centrist Democratic position has no solid ground on which to resist the unqualified antistatism of the House Republicans.

Most currents to the left of center Democrats are not well positioned to argue against Gingrich. Ironically, they have converged on two themes that are now politically limiting, although each of them retains analytical merit. The first is that the state is the captive of dominant social groups. This argument is made in many forms, depending on which dominant group one has in mind (class, gender, and so on) and how one believes that their domination is secured. The second is that politics is everywhere, so that the big politics of national partisan conflict and federal policy has no special status.

If the state is captured by dominant groups and politics is everywhere, on what grounds can one strongly object to antistatism? Feminist legal theorists cannot easily counter antistatist critiques of family and social welfare policies—why should we support a state that is complicit in constructing gender domination? Left communitarian critics of rights discourse have similar problems with regard to attacks on a state that imposes costly and intrusive procedures on market and social actors. In deciding who should get what, why not replace the rigidity and hyperindividualism of rights talk and a legalistic politics with the flexibility of market decisions and the responsiveness to communal preferences of nonstate associations?

The logic of public political argument now greatly weakens the position of people from whom one might expect to hear a compelling answer to the rising chorus of antistatism—centrist Democrats and political currents to their left. This does not make Gingrich's antistatism valid, but it does make it more coherent than its competition.

Prospects

The Contract With America is one of the most successful political initiatives in recent years. It has damaged an already fragile Democratic administration and unified Republican forces to an impressive extent. It is a compelling move in a campaign to rebuild a national Republican regime that Clinton wounded without dismantling. These days there is no predicting the outcome of particular presidential contests even one year in advance. Whether Gingrich runs for president or not, the Republican candidate will surely benefit from the political dynamic that the Contract has skillfully amplified. This fiercely antistatist dynamic is far from played out. □

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Notes

[1] One version of the term limit proposal received a 227-204 vote in the House, but this was well short of the two-thirds required for a constitutional amendment. The May 1995 Supreme Court decision, *U.S. Term Limits v. Thornton*, further diminishes the chances of this part of the Contract With America being achieved. Measures passed on the following issues: House rules revisions (1/4); congressional accountability (1/5); balanced-budget amendment (1/26); unfunded mandates (2/1); line-item veto (2/6); anti-crime (2/7-14); national security (2/16); moratorium on federal regulations (2/24); civil litigation (3/7); product liability (3/10); and welfare (3/24). The Senate defeated the balanced-budget amendment on March 2.

[2] Ed Gillespie and Bob Schellhas, eds., *Contract With America: The Bold Plan by Rep. Newt Gingrich, Rep. Dick Armey and the House Republicans to Change the Nation* (Times Books, 1994), pp. 7-12. The copyright on the book is held by the Republican National Committee. The editors were on the staffs of Armey and the Republican National Committee. Gingrich and Armey are identified as the authors, along with House Republicans in general.

[3] Stanley Greenberg claimed: "Clearly the explicit images of the Reagan era are very negative for the public, particularly Reaganomics." Cited in Richard L. Berke, "Republicans' Campaign Trail Turns Right, Toward Reagan," *New York Times*, October 17, 1994.

[4] The Contract With America provides an impetus for legislative efforts in areas outside its main focus. For example, Republicans in a House subcommittee voted to repeal the Davis-Bacon Act of 1931—which requires that workers on federal construction projects be paid at local prevailing union rates. One argument they used was that this measure amounts to an unfunded mandate for states and cities and thus should be eliminated. Robert Marshall Wells, "Panel Votes to Repeal Laws After Democrats Walk Out," *Congressional Quarterly* 3/4/95: 693.

[5] *Contract With America*, p. 7.

[6] Democratic Party Platform, adopted by the 1992 Democratic National Convention on July 14, 1992, reprinted in *Congressional Quarterly Almanac: 102nd Congress, 2nd Session 1992* (Washington: *Congressional Quarterly, Inc.*, 1993), p. 59-A.

[7] Differences in meaning between "contract" and "covenant" are congruent with the interpretation of these documents that I am proposing. In most dictionaries the first definition given for each term is very similar—each is defined as an agreement between two or more persons to do or not do something. The next definitions then diverge considerably. A typical second definition of contract is: "an agreement enforceable by law." A common further definition of covenant is: "a solemn agreement between the members of a church to act together in harmony with the precepts of the gospel." Contract signifies a more formal and more legal agreement among distinct agents; covenant signifies a shared commitment among agents who consider themselves linked in a community. The above definitions are from the *Random House Dictionary of the English Language*, second edition.

[8] The book in which the Contract With America is engulfed rarely has this performative quality. Gingrich's 1995 speeches sometimes have it, which makes his public performances more effective than those of most of the politicians with whom he is competing. The capacity to articulate basic values in the act of declaring immediate objectives requires a clarity about both that is not often achieved and an ability to fuse them in an active way. Absent the values, what remains is a set of programs; absent the account of plausible goals, there is an avowal of principle. One term that captures the strength of a document like the Contract With America is manifesto (from "manifest," meaning to show clearly). For obvious historical reasons this term is not much favored by those announcing right-of-center political projects. Most alleged manifestos on the left or center are really statements of perspective and lack the dynamic and concrete qualities of the Republican Contract.

[9] Advocates of abortion rights have claimed that anti-abortion groups retain an eventual commitment to eliminating anything close to the *Roe v. Wade* notion of abortion rights. They are right, but their need to make this argument indicates the extent to which the Christian right has begun to grasp the need for strategic compromises in order to be in a position to achieve basic goals, rather than simply stating those goals as immediate demands and denouncing those who refuse to agree. Richard Benedetto, "Christian Coalition Gains a Political Voice," *USA Today* 5/18/95.

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Michael Lind

ARE WE A NATION?

An Argument for "Trans-America"

"Are we a nation?" The question was raised, in an address of that title, by Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts after the Civil War. At the end of the twentieth century, the question of whether America is a nation has arisen again. Unlike Sumner, the great champion of Union and racial integration, proponents of the leading schools of thought about American national identity today—multiculturalism and democratic universalism—tend to answer the question in the negative.

Are we a nation? No, say the multiculturalists, who are found predominantly though not exclusively on the left. The United States, they say, is not a nation-state. Rather, it is a nation of nations, a federation of nationalities or cultures sharing little or nothing but a common government: a miniature UN. How the cultures that compose the multinational American citizenry are to be defined is the subject of dispute among those who think of America in this way. Contemporary multiculturalists usually identify the nations or cultures of the United States with five races defined by descent: white, black or African-American, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, and American Indian/Inuit. In contrast, a small but eloquent band of old-fashioned cultural pluralists (in the tradition of the early-twentieth-century American thinkers Horace Kallen and Randolph Bourne) tends to identify the nations of America with ethnic groups, particularly white ethnic groups: English, German, Irish, Italian, Polish, and so on. Though they may disagree about how many American cultures there are, multiculturalists and cultural pluralists agree that the United States is not a nation-state like France or Poland or China or even Brazil, but a multinational federation, like Canada and Switzerland and the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. The philosopher Michael Walzer has summarized this view, common to multiculturalists and cultural pluralists: "It isn't inconceivable that America will one day become an American nation-state, the many giving way to the one, but that is not what it is now; nor is that its destiny."

A multiculturalism of the right is conceivable, as a response by conservatives who wish to preserve cultural or racial "purity" through a policy of voluntary ethnic or racial segregation; something like this is promoted by the French right of Jean Marie Le Pen, and there are American parallels in some of the proposals of the Ku Klux Klan. To date, however, most multiculturalists and cultural pluralists in the United States have been on the political left. They have tended to share an antipathy to the mainstream culture of the American majority. Denying or ignoring the black and Latin American elements of American vernacular culture, multiculturalists tend to misdescribe it as "white" culture. Compounding the confusion, theorists of multiculturalism, like many conservatives, often identify this white middle-American culture—rather implausibly, it must be said—with "Western civilization."* The confusion only deep-

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* Whether the diverse societies of the ancient Mediterranean, Latin Christendom, and modern Western Europe and its lands of settlement and colonies really can be spoken of as a single civilization or culture is open to question. Even if they could, the United States, and all of the English-speaking countries,

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ens when multiculturalists count among the supposed victims and enemies of "Western civilization" immigrants from Spanish-speaking, Catholic Latin America, whose traditions exhibit greater continuity with ancient Rome and Latin Christendom than does the culture of Protestant, English-speaking North Americans. The confusion arises from the equation—as spurious in the case of Latin American mestizos as in the case of black Americans—of nonwestern with nonwhite. If one rejects this assumption, if one assumes that Americans of different races can, and in fact do, share, not only a common civilization but a common nationality, then the multicultural enterprise simply collapses.

The major opposition to multiculturalism today comes from democratic universalists, who are mostly, though not exclusively, on the political right. *Are we a nation?* The democratic universalists answer No as well. Universalists reject the multicultural celebration of racial-cultural identities, fearing it will encourage the "Balkanization" of America; however, they do not counter it with an inclusive American nationalism of their own. By their own theory, they cannot; for democratic universalists agree with multiculturalists that the United States is not a conventional nation-state. The United States, according to universalists, is not a nation-state at all, but an idea-state, a nationless state based on the philosophy of liberal democracy in the abstract. There is no American people, merely an American Idea. Someone who believes ardently in the founding idea (variously defined as human equality or natural rights or civil liberty or democracy or constitutional government) is a genuine American, even if he shares little or nothing of the prevalent culture, mores and historical memories of the American cultural majority. Americanness, in this view, is less akin to membership in a national community than to belief in a secular political faith—the religion of democracy. In the words of the late Theodore H. White, "Americans are not people like the French, Germans, Japanese....Americans are held together only by ideas." Another journalist, Cokie Roberts, has written, "We have nothing binding us together as a nation—no common ethnicity, history, religion, or even language—except the Constitution and the institutions it created." (The fact that nowadays conservatives tend to espouse democratic universalism is surprising, inasmuch as this doctrine confuses the American *nation* with its *government*—a point lost on everyone on the right except for a few "paleoconservatives").*

The democratic universalist's characterization of the United States as a nonnational idea-state usually comes as part of a package with American exceptionalism—the belief that the United States is not only different in kind from other countries but superior in its morality and institutions. House Speaker Newt Gingrich has called for Americans to reject multiculturalism and "reassert American exceptionalism." The British writer Paul Johnson even claims the future of humanity depends on the geopolitical power of the United States, "a great and mighty nation which is something more than a nation, which is an international community in itself, a prototype global community, but which at the same time is a unity, driven by agreed assumptions, accepting a common morality and moral aims, and able therefore to marshal and deploy its forces with stunning effect."

These, then, are the two schools of thought that have almost monopolized recent discussion of American identity. Both agree that the United States has never been a conventional nation-state, and differ only as to what kind of nonnational state it is or should be. Is the United States, as the multiculturalists claim, a federation of races, or is it—as the democratic universalists argue—a postnational idea-state?

The answer is: neither. The multiculturalists and the democratic universalists are both wrong. The United States is not, and never has been, either a multinational democracy or a nonnational democracy. The United States has been, is, and

would be best understood as atypical offshoots of a continental civilization in which the cultural leaders for the longest periods were Italy and France, and which is based on a shared legacy of Roman law and Catholicism.

* It can be argued, to be sure, that democratic universalism on the right is a rather thinly camouflaged popular nationalism, with "democracy" and "Western civilization" really understood, by advocates and audience alike, to refer to what used to be called the American way of life, not to Norwegian parliamentary procedure or Italian literature.

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should continue to be a liberal and democratic nation-state.

The multiculturalists are mistaken in equating the conventionally defined American races with cultures, and identifying those cultures, in turn, with nationalities. By the usual criteria of nationality, most of the Americans who are labeled white, black, Hispanic, and Asian—as well as American Indians and Inuit who have assimilated to the mainstream culture—are members of a single national community, the American nation. That nation is not homogeneous; it is divided into subcultures, some of which, like the historic black American subculture, more or less correspond to race ("Hispanic" and "Asian and Pacific Islander," though, are bureaucratic categories that do not correspond to genuine ethnic subcultures). A people does not have to be as homogeneous as, say, the Japanese in order to constitute a nation; Italians are members of a single nation, in spite of their enormous regional variety, and the racial diversity of Brazil and Mexico does not mean that those countries lack distinctive national heritages and identities.

While the multiculturalists and their cousins the cultural pluralists are wrong to think of the United States as a federation of racial cultures, the democratic universalists are mistaken in thinking that American national identity can be founded on an idea. The very notion of a country based on an idea is absurd. What if two countries are founded on the same idea—say, individual rights, or the rule of law? Does that mean they are the same country? The communist states all professed to be founded on the ideas of Marx and Lenin—and yet Russian, Chinese and Vietnamese communists remained not only distinct from each other but often mutually hostile. At best, a political or religious dogma is merely one—and not the most important—element of the culture that distinguishes one nationality from another.

A nation may be *dedicated* to a proposition, but it cannot *be* a proposition—this is the central insight of American nationalism, the doctrine that is the major alternative to multiculturalism and democratic universalism. To the question, *Are we a nation?* the American nationalist answers with a resounding and unequivocal Yes. A straightforward American nationalism, in one form or another, is *the* alternative to the fissioning that the multiculturalists celebrate as pluralism and the democratic universalists condemn as Balkanization.

A genuine nation is not a mere citizenry, a mere collection of individuals who share nothing other than common rulers and common laws. If a common government alone were sufficient, the Soviet and Romanov and Hapsburg and Ottoman Empires would have been nations themselves, rather than "prison-houses of the nations" (as Czarist Russia was described).* A real nation is a concrete historical community, defined primarily by a common language, common folkways, and a common vernacular culture.† Such an extrapolitical American nation exists today, and has existed in one form or another for hundreds of years. Most Americans, of all races, are born and acculturated into the American nation; most immigrants and their descendants will be assimilated into it. The American nation is different in detail from the Chinese and Russian and Mexican and French nations. It is not, however, different in kind.

Not only does the transracial American majority constitute a single nation, but that majority is deeply nationalist in its sentiments. Few Americans are consistent liberals or conservatives; most are nationalists, by reflex if not reflection. American nationalism, however, is the political doctrine that dares not speak its name.

American nationalism is almost never represented in public discussions of American identity, which as I have noted tend to be dominated by multiculturalism and democratic universalism. Since World War II, nationalism has been consid-

*The language of international law confuses matters, by referring to subjects or citizens of a state as its nationals whether the state corresponds to an actual nation or not. The United Nations really should be called the United Regimes or the United States (the United States, conversely, might more accurately be called the United Nation of America).

†For the nationalist, as for some opponents of nationalism, there is a difference between patriotism and nationalism. Patriotism is allegiance to a particular government or constitution; nationalism is loyalty to the interests of the cultural nation. The nationalist is willing to sacrifice patriotic duty to national loyalty, if necessary—as in 1776, when the American Patriots decided that the needs of the American nation had to prevail over their patriotic allegiance to the British empire. Governments should serve nations, not nations governments.

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ered by many to have been discredited by its association with German National Socialism, Italian Fascism, and Japanese militarism (which were of course three quite different phenomena). American intellectuals have also been deeply influenced by political philosophies hostile to nationalism. On the left, antinationalism has been fed by Marxism, which viewed nationalism as an ephemeral phase of political development destined to be superseded in the era of cosmopolitan socialism (ironically, Marxism has proven to be an ephemeral phase of nationalism in Russia and China). The antinationalists of the right tend to be nostalgic for multinational empires like the Hapsburg and British, and to associate nationalism with the overthrow of European rule over nonwhite nations, something of which a certain kind of conservative disapproves. Although nationalism around the world has often been liberal and democratic rather than authoritarian or totalitarian, American politicians, intellectuals, and journalists continue to indulge in the old-fashioned practice of treating nationalism as a *malum in se*. The world, we are told again and again, is threatened by a resurgence of nationalism (as though there had ever been an era of selfless internationalism). Adjectives like "aggressive" and "sinister" and "dark" are often affixed to nationalism in order to make the term seem even more frightening. The critics of nationalism in the abstract seldom trouble themselves to ask whether it makes any sense to view things as different or incompatible as the eighteenth-century philosopher J. G. Herder's tolerant aesthetic pluralism and Hitler's murderous racist imperialism as aspects of the same phenomenon—in this case, "German nationalism."

The pejorative connotations that hover around the subject of nationalism—ours and everyone else's—in conventional American public discourse do not mean that nationalism is weak or nonexistent in the American body politic. Indeed, nationalism in one form or another is probably the conception of American identity with the greatest influence among Americans as a whole, particularly among the majority who do not have college educations. Outside of a small educated elite, hardly any Americans think of their country as a miniature UN or as an abstract idea-state. Though they may be trained to repeat these formulas, most Americans do not really believe them. The patriotism of ordinary Americans is no different in kind from that of Italians or Indians or Russians; it has more to do with family, neighborhood, customs, and historical memories than with constitutions or political philosophies. It may very well be, indeed, that popular nationalism, as a sentimental attachment to people and customs and country, is much stronger in the United States than in Western Europe, where "post-patriotic" attitudes, at least among the more educated, are much more prevalent.

The American people, then, constitute a genuine nation, with its own nation-state, the U.S.A., and with its own genuine, if largely inarticulate, nationalism. The really interesting argument, it turns out, is not the stale debate between multiculturalists and democratic universalists about what kind of nonnational state the United States is: multi- or post? It is another controversy, a less familiar dispute, over how the "nation" in the American "nation-state" is to be defined. In this debate among nationalists, the two sides are nativists and liberal nationalists.

Nativists tend to impose racial and/or religious tests on membership in the national community. To be American, in the nativist view, is to be white and/or Christian or a member of the "Judeo-Christian tradition" (a euphemism that really means Christian). The racial and religious definitions of Americanness are not always joined; there are secular racists, and there are conservative nativists who envision a multiracial but pan-Christian American national community. The latter option—a pan-Christian but not white-supremacist American nativism—is the more or less overt goal of right-wing Christian political activists like Pat Robertson, leader of the Christian Coalition. Old-fashioned Anglo-American or even Euro-American nativism will have diminishing appeal in a country in which a growing percentage of the population is nonwhite; however, the potential attractiveness of a nonracist, pan-Christian religious nativism to Americans of all races should not be underestimated.

Liberal nationalists share an unapologetic American nationalism with nativists—but that is about all that they share. The liberal nationalist rejects racial or religious tests for membership in the American nation. A nonwhite American is as genuine an American as a white American (indeed,

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black Americans can make a better claim for that "Americanness" than most of the descendants of European immigrants.) One can despise and reject Christianity and Judaism and be not merely a fine citizen but a member in good standing of the American cultural nation. Insofar as American nationality is a matter of vernacular culture, rather than race or beliefs, a radical black lesbian atheist who grows up in Chicago is more "American" than a white English conservative who immigrates in adulthood and who, though he is an expert on the Founding Fathers, is unfamiliar with the American idiom.*

For the liberal nationalist, then, the American nation is defined by language and culture, not by race or religion. The national language is American English, in its various regional and subcultural dialects. The national culture is not the high culture of the art galleries and civics classes, but rather the vernacular culture that has evolved in the United States in the past several centuries, and continues to evolve, from the unsystematic fusion of various regional and racial customs and traditions. The liberal nationalist argument, it must be stressed, is not that a transracial American nationality is something that will emerge in the future, from the mingling of today's conventionally defined American racial and ethnic groups. Such mixing, rather, merely reinforces a common cultural nationality that already exists.

The American cultural nation, properly defined, has included Americans of different races for centuries. White supremacists and black nationalists to the contrary, black Americans were members of the American cultural nation for generations before they were granted U.S. citizenship. Indeed, the transracial American nation is considerably older than the United States itself; for several generations before 1776, a distinct, unique, English-speaking North American nationality, including slaves born and raised on American soil, had begun to diverge from other parts of the English-speaking world.* Even if the federal government were abolished tomorrow, the American cultural nation would endure. The American nation is older than its government, and will almost certainly outlive the United States, which like all regimes will prove mortal. States and constitutions come and go; cultural nations, though they are not eternal, last a very long time.

Of the two rival versions of American nationalism, nativism has the greatest antiquity, for the simple reason that most Americans, until well into the twentieth century, thought of the American people as a white Christian nation (something that is hardly surprising, insofar as most Americans for generations to come will be conventionally white and at least nominally Christian). Even though it rejects the venerable traditions of white supremacy and Protestant/Christian hegemony, the liberal nationalist philosophy for which I argue has deep roots in the American heritage—in the strong-state nationalism of George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, Daniel Webster, Abraham Lincoln, and Theodore Roosevelt; in the New Deal liberalism of Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman, and Lyndon Johnson that created and sustains a middle class that would be destroyed by unchecked capitalism; and, most important of all, in the tradition of color-blind racial integrationism descending from abolitionists like Frederick Douglass to civil rights reformers like Martin Luther King, Jr. Liberal nationalism might be most simply defined as yesterday's "melting pot" nationalism updated to favor the cultural fusion and genetic amalgamation not just of white immigrant groups but of Americans of all races.

In civil rights law, the natural corollary to the liberal nationalist conception of the American nation as a cultural and (in time) genetic melting pot is the rejection of any distinctions based on biological race. Race is an arbitrary category that is bound to grow more arbitrary, as intermarriage

*Liberal nationalism and nativism tend to be found on the "liberal" and "conservative" sides of the contemporary political spectrum. It is possible, however, to be a liberal nationalist with many conservative political views ("liberal" in liberal nationalism refers to the liberal-democratic constitution of the state, not to the particular policies). It is also possible to imagine an American racial or religious nativism that is "left-wing" with respect to economics, like the populism of William Jennings Bryan.

*The linguistic and cultural definition of nationality, it should be noted, is an objective anthropological test that does not depend on subjective perceptions. If subjective beliefs defined nationality, then Swedes, say, might decide they were all really Portuguese, and the actual Portuguese would have no grounds for objecting.

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produces growing numbers of Americans with ancestors in several of today's officially defined racial groups. In civil rights, liberal nationalists favor a return to the original, color-blind vision that animated the leaders of the Civil Rights Revolution like Martin Luther King, Jr., Bayard Rustin, Hubert Humphrey, and Lyndon Johnson. Since the 1960s, this vision has been betrayed on the left by multiculturalists, with their defense of racial quotas and their conception of the United States as a federation of genetically defined nationalities. It is time for the American center-left to reclaim the color-blind idealism that should never have been ceded to the reactionary right.

Liberal nationalism provides not merely a different vision of the American people, but a different understanding of the American past. American exceptionalism, the belief in American uniqueness that is so important to democratic universalism, is rejected by liberal nationalists, whose American patriotism does not depend on overblown claims about American uniqueness or superiority. One should cherish one's nation, as one should cherish one's family, not because it is the best in the world, but because, with all of its flaws, it is one's own.

The exceptionalist interpretation of American history holds that American politics from 1776 to the present has consisted of the gradual, painful, but progressive working out of the ideas of the Founding Fathers. Exceptionalism, in other words, is both *idealist* and *gradualist*. The liberal nationalist conception of the American past, in contrast, is *realist* and *catastrophist*. It is realist, insofar as it sees American society as the result of power struggles and inherited cultural legacies, not just abstract philosophical debates. It is catastrophist, insofar as it views American history not as the smooth and logical unfolding of an argument about liberty or democracy, but as a sequence of racial, cultural, and political regimes, each assembled by the victors in a cataclysmic and violent struggle.

Though the word "revolution" is easily tossed about today, in fact there have been only three genuine revolutions in U.S. history—the War of Independence and its violent aftermath (including the suppression of Shays' Rebellion and the Whiskey Rebellion); the Civil War and Reconstruction; and the Civil Rights Revolution from the 1950s to the 1970s. American revolutions are violent. More Americans died in the Civil War than in all of America's foreign wars combined. During the Civil Rights era, the United States was convulsed by the most extensive domestic political violence since the end of Reconstruction. American revolutions are also disruptive. Since 1789, the French have had five republics (along with several monarchies, one directory, a consulate, and a couple of empires). By contrast, the United States, since 1789, has had only one federal constitution; the dominant parties have had the same names since the 1860s; even the boundaries of the states, unlike political jurisdictions in other democracies, are fixed in America. The formal constitutional and political continuity that we Americans cherish disguises the fact that there have been three "republics" of the United States since the War of Independence: Anglo-America (1789-1861); Euro-America (1875-1957) and Multicultural America (1972-present).

Each of these three republics has put the basic building blocks of the nation-state—race, culture, and citizenship—together in a different way.* At the risk of oversimplification (a risk inseparable from any attempt to discuss major issues of public importance), I argue that each of these American "republics" has had its own consensus, its own threefold national formula, describing the national community, the civic religion, and the political creed. At any given time, there have been dissident views; but in every era, a particular national formula has tended to prevail.

In the national formula of the First Republic of the United States, Anglo-America, the national community was identified with the Anglo-Saxon or Anglo-Germanic element of the population; the civic religion, Protestant Christianity; and the political creed, federal republicanism. There was considerable doubt as to whether Irish-American Catholics—to say nothing of Jews or black Americans—could ever be "real Americans." The Civil

*I do not deny that American history can be divided into periods on the basis of different criteria—for example, political party systems, or profound changes in the distribution of power between the state and federal governments (like the New Deal). Changes in the rules governing race and citizenship are not the only changes defining eras in American history; they are merely the most important.

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War and Reconstruction created a Second Republic, Euro-America, which peaked in the middle of the twentieth century. The Euro-American national formula, redefined to accommodate the European immigrants of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, was somewhat more inclusive than the Anglo-American. To be a "genuine American," according to the popular consensus in the Second Republic, was to be of European descent and to be Christian (Protestant or Catholic) in religion (the Eisenhower-era phrase "Judeo-Christian" was, in practice, a polite euphemism for pan-Christian). The antebellum elimination of most restrictions on white male suffrage and the post-Civil War nationalization of basic civil rights turned the Anglo-American political creed of federal republicanism into a creed of federal democracy; even in the 1950s, however, the United States remained a highly decentralized federal state.

The Third Republic is the one in which we live. Multicultural America was born in the turmoil of the Civil Rights Revolution between the 1950s and the 1970s. The New Deal liberals who led the first, color-blind stage of the Civil Rights Revolution, which dismantled white supremacy, lost control during the second phase, which saw the triumph of group consciousness and racial preference programs. A revolution that began as an attempt to purge law and politics of racial classifications and to enlarge the middle class to include the disadvantaged ended, ironically, with a renaissance of race-conscious government and the political triumph of economic conservatism. Multicultural America is not the Third Republic that color-blind liberals intended in the early sixties; it is the Third Republic that emerged later, from the intersection of black-power radicalism and white-backlash conservatism. Its patron saints are not Martin Luther King, Jr., and Lyndon Johnson, but Stokely Carmichael and Richard Nixon.

Unlike the First and Second American Republics, which were clearly nation-states, the Third Republic has the outward trappings of a multinational state. According to the quasi-official ideology of the Third Republic, there is no coherent American national community, but rather five national communities, defined by race—white, black, Hispanic, Asian and Pacific Islander, and Native American. The civic religion, to the extent that there is one, is a secular philosophy, an ideal of authenticity, that stresses conformity to particular racial or sexual or religious subcultures. The political creed of post-sixties America has been centralized multicultural democracy—the replacement of territorial federalism by a kind of Washington-centered racial federalism (exemplified by federally coerced racial gerrymandering of electoral districts).

The basic elements of Multicultural America came together by the early seventies; since then its institutions and even its rhetoric ("multiculturalism," "affirmative action," "diversity") have been relatively stable. Multicultural America is built on the repudiation of white supremacy (common to the first two American republics) in favor, not of color-blind liberalism, but of an elaborate system of racial preferences for citizens who are officially designated as nonwhite by government bureaucracies. These racial preferences in education, hiring, contracting, and political redistricting are available not only to descendants of the victims of American white supremacy, but also to recent immigrants from Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and the Indian subcontinent. The high level of legal immigration from Latin American and Asia means that the category of Americans eligible for racial preference programs and subsidies at the expense of white Americans, whether native or naturalized, grows by almost a million every year.

Far from being a challenge to the post-sixties American power structure, or an inevitable response to changing demography, the ideology of multiculturalism is, in practice, a rationalization for the racially based tokenism that has ramified throughout American society since the 1960s. Multiculturalism is not the wave of the future, but an aftershock of the black-power radicalism of the sixties. Nor is multiculturalism, in the broadest sense, to be blamed entirely on the left. From the beginning, conservatives have been as instrumental as liberals in promoting racial preference politics, for tactical reasons. The Nixon administration pioneered the imposition of racial quotas in the work force, in order to pit unionized white workers against black workers; with equal cynicism, the Reagan and Bush administrations promoted ghettoization of black and Hispanic voters in racially gerrymandered congressional districts,

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thereby undermining Democratic congressmen and helping the Republican party to capture the House of Representatives in 1994.

While the influence of multicultural ideology on campus may appear to give credence to conservative charges that the left is in control, it can be argued that racial preference programs in politics and the workplace actually help the right. Tokenism provides a suitably "progressive" camouflage for a system of divide-and-rule politics in which the homogeneous American social and economic elite—the white overclass—benefits from racial divisions among the American majority. Without the political division of wage-earning white, black, and Hispanic Americans along racial lines—a division exacerbated, though not caused, by racial preferences and multicultural ideology—it is doubtful that the white overclass in the United States, in the last generation, would have been able to carry out its agenda of destroying unions, reducing wages, cutting worker benefits, replacing full-time workers with temps, and shifting the burdens of taxation from the rich to the middle and working classes, with so little effective popular opposition.

If Multicultural America endures for another generation or two, the future for the United States is a bleak one of sinking incomes for the transracial American majority and growing resentment against the affluent and politically dominant white oligarchy. The Balkanization of America, in the form of civil war along racial lines, is unlikely. American vernacular culture is so powerful in its appeal that it will break down even the strongest immigrant cultures, and interracial marriage is already undermining racial categories. The real threat is not the Balkanization but the Brazilianization of America, not fragmentation along racial lines but fissioning along class lines. Brazilianization is symbolized by the increasing withdrawal of the white American overclass into its own barricaded nation-within-a-nation, a world of private neighborhoods, private schools, private police, private health care, and even private roads, walled off from the spreading squalor beyond. Like a Latin American oligarchy, the rich and well-connected members of the overclass can flourish in a decadent America with Third World levels of inequality and crime.

Such a grim future cannot be averted by trivial reforms, like the pseudo-populist gimmicks of the plutocratic right (tax cuts, term limits) or the technocratic panaceas of the neoliberals (worker retraining, reinventing government). Renewing the American nation-state will require a real, not merely metaphorical, revolution in politics and society, a revolution as sweeping—though, we hope, not as violent—as the Civil Rights Revolution. The goal of liberal nationalism, as a political movement, must be to dismantle Multicultural America and replace it with a Fourth Republic of the United States—let us call it Trans-America.

In Trans-America, a color-blind, gender-neutral regime of individual rights would be combined with government activism promoting a high degree of substantive social and economic equality. The racial and gender quotas on the left, and the educational and political privileges of the wealthy oligarchy defended by the right, would be rejected in favor of a new union of cultural and economic nationalism in the interest of the transracial middle class. A truly representative political system, purged of both racial gerrymandering and of campaign finance practices that favor corporations and the rich; a new system of middle-class-friendly capitalism, in which today's growing economic inequality has been checked and reversed by selective government intervention in the marketplace; and a color-blind society, in which cultural fusion is accompanied, in time, by racial amalgamation—these are the goals of American liberal nationalism at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first.

Liberal nationalism is not the only way beyond the present stalemate of a discredited multicultural liberalism and plutocratic conservatism. It is the only path, however, that can lead to an America in which you and your descendants would want to live. □

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David Brody

CRIMINALIZING THE RIGHTS OF LABOR

There was a time when trade unionists despaired of finding justice in the American courts. Consider the landmark cases: *In re Debs* (1894), handing federal judges unlimited power to restrain labor activity by means of injunctions; *Loewe v. Lawlor* (1908), exposing trade unions to crippling antitrust suits; *Hitchman v. Mitchell* (1917), prohibiting them from organizing workers who had signed contracts (the so-called yellow dog contract) waiving their right to join unions as a condition of employment; *American Steel Foundries v. Tri-City* (1921), declaring picketing to be inherently violent and subjecting it to draconian court regulation. In fact, the United States had very little labor law as such; what it had was judge-made law applying mostly common-law doctrine to the relations between employers and workers. The result was a deep, almost systemic insult to the concept of justice for workers, so much so as to make defiance of the courts a tenet of American trade unionism. If judges acted unfairly, declared Samuel Gompers, "contempt of court" was "obedience to law."

And then, in two steps, a systemic shift occurred. The Norris-LaGuardia Anti-Injunction Act (1932) effectively stripped the federal courts of their labor jurisdiction ("little" Norris-LaGuardias did the same for the important state courts). The space thereby opened—"labor disputes," in the language of Norris-LaGuardia, meaning controversies over the terms and conditions of employment and over association or representation regarding those issues—was filled three years later by the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), which established the rights of workers to organize and engage in collective bargaining. As a comprehensive federal code regulating labor relations in interstate commerce, the NLRA was held by the courts to be the "supreme law of the land." This gave it preemptive standing: conflicting law bearing on its jurisdiction had to defer to the federal labor relations law.

No reader of *Dissent* needs to be told that this law has eroded grievously in recent years, and that there is today a crying need for labor law reform restoring the rights the law says that workers have. But only labor lawyers are likely to be aware that what is foundational to our labor law—that it has preemptive standing—is also under siege. It is as if, now that the labor movement is down, the judges of the 1920s have come back to life to be in on the kill.

In 1992 a stirring strike broke out among the drywall installers of southern California. Drywall workers hang the four-by-twelve wallboard panels that make up the interior walls in residential housing. The job is specialized, physically exhausting, and brutally hard on the arms and shoulders. There are about four thousand drywallers in southern California. When the Carpenters' Union lost its grip on home construction in the early 1980s, drywalling throughout the area became nonunion. And as that happened, the ethnic composition of the work force changed.

One of the first Mexican drywallers was Juan Valadez, who came to Orange County in 1963 from the village of El Maguey in the state of Guanajuato. At that time the pay was good, and a drywaller could make a living. Valadez got a house, raised a family, even sent a couple of his kids to Stanford. He now runs a drywall company in Fullerton. A real American success story. Other men from El Maguey followed him, in a chain migration that was replicated by jobseekers from other Mexican

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villages. Drywalling became overwhelmingly a Mexican trade in Los Angeles, Orange and San Diego counties. But those arriving in later years didn't fare as well as Valadez.

Drywalling deteriorated into a classic sweated trade. With the collapse of California home building in the late 1980s, competition among the subcontractors became fierce, forcing them to drive down piece rates until drywallers were working for as little as three-and-a-half cents a square foot. For a sixty-hour week a man might make three hundred dollars. There were no benefits, no security, no overtime pay, and eventually, not even an even break. Latino labor contractors, "labor barons," began to take over, bringing in gangs of workers and paying them off in cash. Skimming off a percentage became common practice. The start of the union movement, says Jesus Gomez, was the day in November 1991 when he was cheated out of $60 by one of the labor barons, and decided he had had enough.

Gomez and a few others like Roy Navarro and Antonio Hernandez began to meet quietly; they set up committees on a county-wide basis; and they gathered support and some money through an informal network of relatives and countrymen in the trade. In 1987 a similar campaign had won a wage increase, but only temporarily. This time they were going to build a permanent movement. "There is no other way," Gomez later said. "We must rely on each other and those who are fighting for us to make things right. We must organize." They had no contact with organized labor, no formal structure or elected leadership, not even a name, but they were nevetheless a real movement. On June 1, 1992, the drywallers went on strike, and virtually shut down home construction in the Los Angeles area.

Their main tactic was mass picketing. Every morning they would set off in their battered pickups for building sites with fancy names like Coronado Point, La Cresta, Sunburst Tierra. They often got the scabs to quit, but scabs were also yelled at and pushed around and rocks were thrown. Strikers began to be arrested; some were held for deportation. Bail money had to be raised and legal representation found. With rent and utility bills coming due, the thin resources of the strikers ran down. The help they were getting from local churches and community organizations was not enough, and a month into the strike, they turned to the labor movement.

The first meeting made a big impression on AFL-CIO regional director Albert David Sickler. Sickler came away "inspired by the guts" of the strikers, and "touched by the wives and kids there at the hall, and I guess we felt morally obligated to do something for them." Sickler set in motion a major fund-raising drive; over two million dollars flowed in from many unions, some as far away as Australia and Canada. The California Immigrant Workers Association (CIWA), which had earlier been set up primarily to recruit Hispanic workers into the AFL-CIO's associate-membership program, took on the mounting legal problems of the drywallers.

Violence at the building sites escalated, accompanied by some trashing of unfinished construction. Police harassment also got worse; there were mass arrests, trumped-up kidnapping charges at one point, and INS deportation round-ups. In the legal skirmishing, the CIWA lawyers gained the upper hand when they charged the contractors with massive violations of the overtime provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act. It was this threat, more than anything else, that brought them to the bargaining table after four months.

The strikers remained formally independent, but they became increasingly linked to the Carpenters' Union, which provided them with meeting facilities and free phone lines. The bulk of the AFL-CIO strike fund supporting them came from the Carpenters. When the contractors finally agreed to talks, the secretary-treasurer of the Carpenters' district council, Doug McCarron, took over the negotiations. And it was understood that, when they got a contract, the drywallers would vote to join the Carpenters.

On November 10, they had the contract. The Pacific Rim Drywall Association gave them a piece rate of 7 1/4 cents per square foot plus half the cost of health insurance. The contract contained an innovative scheme addressing the competitive problems of the industry. The market share of the unionized subcontractors in the various counties would serve as a benchmark for reopening the agreeement after two years: the piece rate would be raised if market share went up, the subcontractors' health care contribution would be eliminated if it went down. The prospect was thereby opened

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for a collective-bargaining structure that one day might rescue the subcontractors from the cutthroat competition that bled them all. It seemed, at any rate, worth trying.

Around Los Angeles the word that leapt to mind for the agreement was "historic." Maybe labor's decline was not irreversible, union people said, and the Mexican-American workers not beyond reach. The drywallers' victory was a "wake-up call" for the labor movement. "This is what we were destined to do," said one CIWA official, "what we should have been doing all along." As it turned out, that wasn't the only lesson that might be drawn from the drywallers' strike.

A week after the agreement, nonsigning San Diego drywall firms filed suit against Antonio Hernandez, Federico Castaneda, and Luciano G. Salazar—the strike leaders in San Diego—and the Carpenters' Union. The main charge against them was violation of the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO). There are law suits and law suits, of course; the drywallers' strike produced a blizzard of them. But this particular one was deadly serious.

To understand how the drywallers' strike could become a RICO case, we have to enter the arcane universe of RICO litigation. The law, as written in 1970, was intended to deal with a particular problem: the penetration of legitimate business by organized crime. Capturing this kind of elusive activity demanded legislative crafting that was at once comprehensive and elastic, and this, in the hands of inventive prosecutors and lawyers, has made for a law of nearly endless applicability to alleged patterns of criminal conduct not remotely attributable to the Mafia.

The part of the law that applies to labor disputes is paragraph 1962 (c), which reads as follows:

> It shall be unlawful for any person employed by or associated with any enterprise engaged in, or the activities of which affect, interstate or foreign commerce, to conduct or participate, directly or indirectly, in the conduct of such enterprise's affairs through a pattern of racketeering activity or collection of unlawful debt.

This paragraph originally pertained to the use of legitimate businesses by gangsters as a cloak for carrying on racketeering activity. But it can be made to apply to labor disputes because of how the law defines the key words and phrases in it. "Enterprise" means legal entities of all kinds, including unions, but also any "group of individuals associated in fact although not a legal entity." Carrying on a strike or conducting an organizing drive generally meets the criteria for an association-in-fact enterprise. In this instance, the union is a "person" associated with the enterprise—the strike—not the enterprise itself. The reason why a plaintiff would not want the union to be the enterprise is that, under paragraph 1962(c), only persons associated with the enterprise, not the enterprise itself, can be sued, and it is the union, not its officers and agents, that has the deep pockets.

The other key definitions apply to "a pattern of racketeering activity." A "pattern" is two or more racketeering acts committed within ten years that have the same unlawful purpose. "Racketeering activity" means any in a very long list of federal offenses plus any crime under any state law punishable by more than a year in prison. Many of the things that can occur during strikes—throwing rocks, threatening scabs, destroying property—are potentially "racketeering activities" within the meaning of RICO. It is not necessary that RICO defendants be convicted or even charged, only that they be shown to have committed acts for which they could have been charged.

Any hard-fought strike—the drywallers' strike, most certainly—will produce sufficient allegation of "a pattern of racketeering activity" so defined as to pass the threshold, and hence may become a target for a RICO suit.

The drywallers' strike, of course, also fell squarely under federal labor law. The strikers were exercising their right to organize, and they were striking for a collective bargaining agreement, which it is the purpose of the law to encourage. The labor law contains its own definitions of unlawful activity, provides for enforcement, and specifies punishments. If the labor law is preemptive, there would be no point to the construing of RICO's language in which I have indulged (and, I might add, scarcely done justice). But preemption does not bar a RICO suit, or rather, no longer bars it. Beginning with *U.S. v. Thordarson* (1981), the federal courts have undermined that bar by distinguishing among illegal acts: those whose illegal-

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ity is "independent" of the labor law, that are "per se" criminal, do not invoke the preemption bar. It has to be doubly emphasized that the issue is not whether criminal acts committed during a labor dispute are chargeable—of course they are, and always have been. The issue is whether the commission of criminal acts taints labor disputes as such and opens them to legal attack. The federal courts now are saying (with some demurs) that it does, notwithstanding the harm to the NLRA rights of workers.

The complaint initiating the legal proceedings against the Carpenters makes surreal reading. The San Diego strike leaders named in the complaint are referred to respectively as "ringleader and coordinator" (Hernandez) and "leaders in the field" (Salazar and Castaneda), while the strikers are always called "mercenaries." The strike fund is there to employ them in their criminal activities and provide bail and pay fines so that these activities can continue. The gist of the case is contained in the following paragraph in the complaint:

> Hernandez, Castaneda, Salazar, and other mercenaries received payments from the District Council, through the Drywall Strike Fund. A unity of purpose exists between and among the goals of Hernandez, Castaneda, Salazar, the other mercenaries, and the Carpenters' Unions. The criminal conduct engaged in by the individual defendants and the other mercenaries was designed to coerce the signing of Carpenters' Unions' contracts, ultimately providing financial benefit to the District Council, and financial benefit to the local carpenters unions. Hernandez, Castaneda, Salazar, and the other paid mercenaries were agents of the District Council, and/or the Carpenters' Locals, and acting within the course and scope of their employment, when committing the criminal acts herein alleged.

This is probably the place to specify just what was at stake in these charges. Cases involving organized crime or business fraud generally arise from criminal prosecutions by the Justice Department. But RICO also permits civil suits for damages, and these, not criminal prosecutions, are the ones brought in labor disputes. In civil suits, moreover, the law mandates that the defendant pay *treble* damages, plus costs and attorneys' fees. In the drywall suit, we are talking about maybe thirteen million dollars. On top of this are the legal costs, notoriously heavy in RICO suits, that the Carpenters' Union itself incurs. Once its motions for dismissal fail, as they did in the drywall case, the union begins to bleed no matter how it fares in the end.

How it might have fared will never be known because the Carpenters settled before the case came to trial. In itself, this says nothing about the merits of the case. The Carpenters' Union takes a hard-boiled line on law suits—a cost of doing business, so to speak—and generally seeks to get away as cheaply as possible. It was a bad development when the venue was moved from Los Angeles to San Diego, where the union faced a Republican judge and a San Diego jury in the nasty atmosphere that has given us Proposition 187. Nor were the facts of the case especially favorable to the union. The strike fund was administered by an AFL-CIO unit, but the biggest contributor was the Carpenters' Union. The strikers remained independent until the settlement, but they used the Carpenters' facilities and met with local union officials. And the Carpenters got the contract and the drywallers. In what is very like a conspiracy proceeding, the plausibility of concerted action would have made for hard going in a San Diego courtroom.

On the other hand, a RICO argument is highly demanding for the plaintiff because every element has to be satisfied with particularity; a break anywhere along the chain means the collapse of the case. It takes very superior legal talent to carry a RICO civil suit. The San Diego subcontractors had only the best—Sheppard, Mullin, Richter & Hampton. This is the kind of law firm that sponsors programs on public television (which it has done in the Bay Area) and it has a billing rate to match—around $300 an hour for partners. There is no way the San Diego subcontractors could have afforded this quality of legal representation. In fact, the legal fees were paid by the Associated Builders & Contractors (ABC), the employers' association that has been orchestrating the de-unionization of the construction industry. ABC leaders must have read the drywallers' victory in just the same way as did the jubilant L.A. movement, that is, as a breakthrough event for construction unionism. The RICO suit was their counterthrust. What the settlement cost the Carpenters has not been disclosed, but the press release speaks of a "substantial payment."

One might think that the chilling effect on the

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rights of labor applies only to the building trades. After all, the labor law provides, in the representation election, an orderly process for determining whether workers want collective bargaining, and hence eliminates the need for the kinds of make-or-break strikes that prompt RICO suits. Construction workers cannot have representation elections—and are exempted from this provision of the law—because as casual workers they have no fixed employer base for the election. If contractors resist collective bargaining, the only option they have is a recognition strike, which is what the drywallers were engaged in.

But, in fact, RICO is going to be a problem for the entire labor movement because the "orderly process" mentioned above is no longer working. Strikes for recognition are not obsolete, only their form has changed a bit. Now the strike comes *after* the union has won the NLRB election and the employer refuses to negotiate a first contract. Or, alternatively, a unionized employer who wants to be rid of the union bargains to impasse, provokes a strike and brings in permanent replacements—what might be called a recognition strike in reverse. In either case, since there is so little recourse in law, the union can only choose between surrendering and throwing up a picket line. But if it chooses to fight and loses—that is, fails to get a collective-bargaining agreement— the union is faced with the likelihood of a draining RICO suit.

Violence has always shadowed strikes for recognition because, as with the drywallers' strike, so much is at stake for the strikers. The routine resort by employers to striker replacements raises the stakes even higher. But even if they can develop extraordinary picket-line discipline, unions still might not escape RICO charges.

Not all the enumerated racketeering crimes in RICO involve threats or acts of violence; and those that do not—fraud and extortion—have exceedingly elastic meanings. Texas Air, for example, brought a RICO suit against the Air Line Pilots and the Machinists based on allegations of mail and wire fraud in the conduct of their corporate campaign against Eastern Airlines. As for extortion, federal law defines it as "the obtaining of property from another, with his consent, induced by wrongful use of actual or threatened force, violence or fear." The drywall case, in fact, was framed as a pattern of racketeering activity to extort a contract from the subcontractors. "Actual or threatened force" includes economic force, which is to say, the strike. Just what a court might construe as "wrongful," or what mix of violent and purely economic acts and threats it might accept as a pattern of racketeering activity, is entirely open. We can be sure, at any rate, that management lawyers will be probing these frontiers of RICO litigation.

The status of labor-law preemption—its supremacy over conflicting law—is by no means settled. Labor lawyers say that the key decisions are badly argued and contradictory. The issue has not yet returned to the Supreme Court, which could reaffirm an earlier 1973 decision (now badly eroded) sustaining the preemptive authority of the labor law. Or, alternatively, Congress could easily do this by a clarifying amendment. Neither seems likely in the present political climate. Much more probable is more of the creeping assault on labor by a judiciary—this time with RICO as its text—whose reflexive privileging of property rights once convinced Sam Gompers that organized labor could never expect justice in the American courts.

In the meantime, the L.A. drywallers have collective bargaining. So do L.A. janitors, thanks to the Justice for Janitors movement. It took street demonstrations and acts of civil disobedience, but this spring the janitors won a new contract. The Los Angeles Manufacturing Action Program is bringing unions, community groups, and academics together to find ways of organizing the immigrant workers in the city's low-wage industries. So Los Angeles is becoming a live union place. But the question has to be asked: what will labor leaders do when this ferment brings them up against the next potential RICO suit? □

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Martin Kilson

PARADOXES OF BLACK AMERICAN LEADERSHIP

I begin with a straightforward proposition that there have been three types of black political leadership in twentieth century America: (l) pragmatic-activist, (2) systemic-radical, and (3) ethno-radical. The first of these refers to what we commonly think of as the mainstream pattern, pioneered by W.E.B. Du Bois from the Niagara Movement and the founding the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People(NAACP), in the years 1905 to 1910 and onward. Pragmatic activism has produced, in our era, a full-fledged, electoral-based black political class. Members of this class accept the basic parameters of the democratic capitalist system, accept also the broader cultural matrix within which this system is embedded. But there is one crucial refusal. They insist that America must purge itself of white supremacy and of the social institutions and cultural identities in which it is reflected.

The second category refers to a minority but quite persistent strand of black leadership whose representatives reject the basic parameters of American capitalism. Their ideological inspiration has been largely Marxist, and in the 1930s and 1940s, they came together mostly in the American Communist party (CP): thus James W. Ford (a CP presidential candidate), Benjamin Davis, Paul Robeson, Richard Wright, even Ralph Ellison. Du Bois, too, formally joined the Communist party during his last years, which suggests that there is some movement between the first and second categories. People in both of them, of course, accept the larger American culture, which marks them off from the ethno-radicals.

This last group has exhibited what we might call a three-sided schizophrenia toward the democratic capitalist system. First, its representatives endorse the capitalist mechanisms for producing and distributing wealth. But, second, they are indifferent or hostile to democratic politics. And, third, they do not accept the underlying cultural matrix. This cultural antipathy is manifest in various ways; depending on personality and organizational style, leaders adopt different postures of rebellion. They indulge in aggressive verbal and symbolic challenges to mainstream culture. They seek some specific black-ethno replacement for standard features of the culture, in diet, consumption, personal adornment, and so on. Or they aim deeper, countering and seeking to displace basic cultural patterns in religion, family, gender, and historical identity.

Terms such as black nationalists, black militants, Garveyites, Black Muslims, and Afrocentrists refer to this third category. "The legacy of Malcolm X" makes the same reference. What gives this ethno-radicalism its *radical* edge is the rejection of the American cultural mainstream and the demand for a black replacement.

Ethno-Radical Politics

Operationally, black ethno-radicalism has been mainly ritualistic (emotive and cathartic) rather than rationalist (means-and-end focused, accountable, committed to modernity). Exactly why the pattern has taken this shape, I don't quite know, and I prefer to leave this question to the philosophical, culture-probing analysis of writers like Cornel West and Anthony Appiah. I want simply to describe the unanticipated outcomes and the internal contradictions of this leadership pattern.

What is its empirical track record? If we take the official membership of the most promi-

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nent ethno-radical organization, the Nation of Islam, as a gauge, then some twenty thousand blacks have been hived off from the American cultural matrix—out of thirty million in the country as a whole. Data from an earlier period, when Elijah Muhammad and Malcolm X rather than Louis Farrakhan were the leading ethno-radicals, suggest a following of about two hundred thousand. It is reasonable to conclude, then, that this leadership style has achieved a rather low penetration of African-American ranks. But its influence, and the sympathy it has won, extend far beyond the membership of its organizations.

How far? Before trying to answer that question, I want to note one curious paradox of black ethno-radicalism: though it is directed toward the "black masses"—the poor and the underclass—its actual followers are mainly upper-working class and lower-middle class in background. Afrocentric elementary and middle schools in Baltimore, Detroit, Chicago, and Philadelphia draw their students from these same classes, and don't reach beyond them. What has happened to the ethno-radical commitment to fashioning a sense of efficacy among poor blacks in the inner city, reeling from social disarray and macho-male youth fratricide? Where have all the masses-trumpeting black nationalists gone?

The Reach of Malcolm X

Malcolm X produced the first systematic challenge to the pragmatic-activist style of black leadership. But this challenge, although quite real, is not a function of the institutional success of Afrocentrism—not of the direct heirs of Malcolm, like Farrakhan's organization, or of the indirect heirs like the groups around, say, Ron Karenga and Molefi Asante. It isn't their institutions but their personal flamboyance and the ritual catharsis that they make possible that accounts for the success they have had. Again, ritualism, not rationalism, has been overwhelmingly prominent in this challenge to the mainstream black leadership.

Boundaries are sharply drawn in this leadership contest. On one side are the pragmatic activists, who are made up of the heads of the civil rights organizations and their followers among the black intelligentsia (clergy, professionals, and so on), the eight thousand elected black politicians, and the many thousands more black administrators and bureaucrats at all levels of the American polity. (The systemic radicals, insofar as they still have a presence in the black political world, are allied with this first group.) On the other side are the ethno-radicals, now popularly called Afrocentrists, who are themselves divided: first, there is a xenophobic type of Afrocentrism, represented by Farrakhan and Khalid Muhammad; and second, there is a more intellectual type, focused on a kind of Afro-catechism, represented by people like Asante or Ivan Van Sertima, who do not usually indulge in rhetoric demonizing white Americans or denouncing Jews; they are concerned mainly with fashioning cultural theories and a new, assertive, pro-black historiography.

The appeal of Afrocentrism is a matter of real concern to the mainstream, pragmatic-activist leadership, which is itself at a critical stage of its development within American politics. Its expanding public policy role depends increasingly on its ability to forge biracial legislative and electoral alliances. But the triumph of a militant conservatism focused on policy issues like welfare and affirmative action has weakened this ability, and the high visibility of Afrocentrism compounds the difficulty of maintaining or expanding the necessary ties. The normal, racist-tinged resistance among white Americans is now provided with a rationale: one racist thrust begets another. And without a strong biracial alliance, mainstream black leaders cannot fashion effective legislative programs or private sector initiatives that respond to the deep crises of joblessness and social disorganization among the one-third of African-American households that are submerged in poverty.

Evaluating Afrocentrism

Given this dilemma, it is important to sharpen our understanding of the appeal of ethno-radical xenophobia. How deep is the penetration now? And how can we gauge its political significance? In the short run, at least, there are many thousands of "attentive ears" straining toward Farrakhan and Khalid Muhammad. I use the term "attentive ears" advisedly; "supporters" is too strong when we try to measure the seriousness or tenacity of the Afrocentrist appeal. Many thousands of every-

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day-black-folks in urban areas (some suburbs too) turn out to hear the mean and twisted utterances of these men, crowding sports stadiums in Baltimore with twenty thousand people or in New York with twelve thousand. This is the kind of popular emotional response once given to another variant of ethno-radical leadership, the "sacred" ethno-radicals represented by black clergymen like Father Divine, Elder Michaux, Bishop "Sweet Daddy" Grace, and Prophet Jones, among many others. Pragmatic activists, whether they are politicians or intellectuals, have seldom sparked a comparable popular response among African-Americans (Martin Luther King is the sole exception). No contemporary representatives of this type, however stellar in their fields and professions, could draw twenty thousand everyday-black-folks out of "the 'hood" as Farrakhan can. Not Toni Morrison, Marian Wright Edelman, Gwendolyn Brooks, Alice Walker, David L. Lewis, John Lewis, Ishmael Reed, Julian Bond, Cornel West, not even Jesse Jackson. No combination of pragmatic activists is capable of competing today with the xenophobic Afrocentrists in gaining the attentive ears of ordinary black Americans.

Why is this so? Mainly because there is a deep need for catharsis in the black community, for the release of emotion. But there is something more too: Afrocentrism contains a massive entertainment component, sheer flamboyance, designed to make black people feel good. And, one must be candid about this, inasmuch as black Americans have been massively traumatized by this country's white supremacist structures and values, there inevitably has been and will be a demand for the catharsis, the flamboyance, and the good feeling. It has been the special burden of the pragmatic-activist leaders that they took on mainly the rationalist, problem-solving tasks of the black community, while also, always, having to show sensitivity to the ritual tasks as well. And except in the Kennedy-Johnson era, they have never had anything like significant help from American power structures for either of these tasks. So the success of the ethno-radicals cannot be a surprise to any honest and serious observer of American realities. It is still a question, however, what this success in catharsis and entertainment means in institutional and programmatic terms.

A recent poll of black attitudes provides data for an empirical analysis of the relationship between everyday-black-folks and the Afrocentrists. The poll was conducted for *Time* by the Yankelovich Survey in February 1994, and it shows that along what might be called a political-cathartic trajectory, the xenophobic Afrocentrists exert a strong influence among black Americans, but along a political-substantive trajectory, their influence is more limited. For example, when asked whether Farrakhan says things the country should hear, some 70 percent of blacks say yes. When asked whether Farrakhan speaks the truth, 63 percent say yes; whether he is good for the black community, 63 percent yes; a role model for black youth, 53 percent yes.

But when asked to compare an ethno-radical organization like the Nation of Islam with a pragmatic-activist organization like the NAACP, the latter was favored by 74 percent to 31 percent. To the question of who is the most important black leader today, respondents gave Jesse Jackson 34 percent to Farrakhan's 9 percent and Colin Powell's 4 percent. There is, then, a discrepant pattern here, with Afrocentrism showing more emotional than substantive political strength. It provides a certain salve for deep wounds, but its candidates in city council elections in Chicago, Detroit, and Washington, D.C. do not win many votes. And of the thousands who listen to Farrakhan or someone like him in a big city sports stadium, barely a hundred will sign on as members of the Nation of Islam as they exit. The 20,000 Farrakhan followers have to be set against the 840,000 African-Americans who now practice standard or orthodox Islam.

But even a merely cathartic politics, xenophobic in character, which scapegoats whites in general and Jews in particular (and Catholics, gays, and feminists too), though it has little substantive or institutional strength, nonetheless poses a major political dilemma for the mainstream African-American leadership. The Afrocentrist appeal is counterproductive in the context of a democratic politics. The point requires emphasis, and then some specification. Groups such as blacks, Hispanics, and women, who struggle for social standing and mobility, depend upon electoral and leg-

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islative alliances, while Afrocentrist xenophobia generates negative feelings among the necessary allies. Already resistant to biracial alliances, white Americans now have a new rationale for their resistance—while at the same time Afrocentrism resonates among ordinary blacks. These two facts together make for a kind of double jeopardy for black pragmatic activists. The escape from this dangerous dynamic is complicated by the special circumstances associated with black-Jewish discord over the past twenty-five years.

Blacks and Jews

The antecedents of this discord go back at least to the Ocean Hill-Brownsville school district election in New York City 1968, but for my purposes here the viciously anti-Semitic speech by Khalid Muhammad at Kean College in New Jersey in November 1993 is a suitable starting point. Understandably, prominent Jewish intellectuals published major articles attacking Muhammad's speech. But, beyond that, they also attacked what they viewed as an overall softness toward anti-Semitism among the mainstream black leadership. This criticism was sharpened as a result of another event in the fall of 1993: the creation of a cross-cutting alliance involving ethno-radicals and pragmatic activists in the black community. From my perspective on African-American leadership dynamics, criticism of this latter effort was off the mark, unbalanced, and analytically shallow.

For one thing, the charge that the African-American intelligentsia has been soft on black anti-Semitism is just factually wrong. No one close to this intelligentsia can be unaware of its vigilance against extremism. Although the white media have virtually never recognized it, this vigilance has prevented or, at least, helped to prevent the export from the African-American community of demented extremists to crisis-ridden areas in Africa. During the dangerous and protracted period of intense black/white conflict in the Republic of South Africa, for example, not one Afrocentric-inspired American crossed the Atlantic to advocate or practice terrorism in South Africa. Figures like Leon Sullivan, Jesse Jackson, Andrew Young, John Conyers, John Lewis, Leon Higginbotham, William Coleman, Julian Bond, Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, Marian Wright Edelman, and Cornel West, to name just a few, exerted steady pressure—intellectual, moral, organizational—against terrorist discourse among black Americans.

In this business of reining in ethnocentric extremists, the African-American intelligentsia has a much better record than, say, the Irish-American intelligentsia, though the latter group has never been subjected to the same kind of broad brush criticism. Until 1994, few Irish-Americans were vigilantly or boldly engaged in criticizing and checking the many ties between IRA extremists and their American supporters. The dangerous and intellectually shameful coddling of ethnocentric extremists by mainstream leaders, for which some Jewish intellectuals have criticized the black community, is far more prominent among white ethnic groups. One could just as easily add to the Irish-Americans, the Greeks, Armenians, Serbs, and Croats, among others. Indeed, until the Hebron massacre of 1994, most Jewish-American leaders and intellectuals virtually ignored extremists like those of the Kach movement, largely recruited and financed here.

It was also a mistake to pick a fight with mainstream black leaders because of their bid for ties between themselves and the Afrocentrists—ties aimed at a specific task of coping with the runaway drug crisis and criminal crisis in inner-city black communities. No doubt, the intrinsic illegitimacy of Farrakhan-type Afrocentrists in the eyes of Jewish leaders is valid, and black leaders are obligated to address sensitively this Jewish concern. With Ben Chavis's self-destruction as executive secretary of the NAACP, the immediate issue is now moot. But the deeper question of odd-bedfellow alliances within a democratic polity remains relevant for discussion and evaluation. I want to argue that, while such alliances are potentially counterproductive to long-run democratic purposes, every instance of cross-cutting ties isn't necessarily counterproductive; and this most recent example should not jeopardize the quest for black-Jewish concord.

In general, cross-cutting ties involve minimal reciprocity for the sake of some larger interest that none of the groups alone can achieve. Such alliances are, after all, commonplace in a

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pluralistic and highly competitive democratic polity like ours, and the mainstream black leaders are not innocents in this matter. For example, FDR's New Deal policy advances, which benefited broad sections of the American working class and poor, the middle class too, were the work of some very odd bedfellows. The New Deal coalition included Ku Klux Klan-supported white politicians from the South. Yet, though infuriated and embittered by these partners, pragmatic-activist black leaders (the NAACP, the National Urban League, the National Negro Congress [a Marxist-oriented organization], and much of the black church leadership) did nothing to fracture the political basis of the New Deal. Why not? Because the reciprocal goals that sealed the alliance were, however minimal the returns for African-Americans, beneficial enough to justify the ties to Klan supporters. It is within this kind of democratic give-and-take that, I suggest, the ties between mainstream black leaders and Afrocentrists should be evaluated today.

Still, the long-run legitimacy of the mainstream leaders depends, as I have said, upon the expansion of their alliances outside the black community. Progressive, liberal, and moderate whites, even what might be called proactively conservative whites (conservatives, that is, who wish to solve, not ignore, the multilayered crisis confronting the African-American poor), must carry a special responsibility in this regard. In today's climate of expanding militant and plutocratic conservativism, Republican party politicians, and the interest groups they represent, cannot be expected to facilitate this alliance expansion. Quite the contrary. Their political discourse is riddled with subliminal anti-black or Negrophobic messages—also with antifeminist, anti-Hispanic, and homophobic messages. And if Michael Lind's *New York Review* article on the worldview of Pat Robertson is taken as seriously as it should be, then we have to add, subliminal anti-Jewish messages too.

It is, then, important to take some steps, even small steps, toward a reduction of black-Jewish tensions. Some signs of movement down this path were apparent in the 1994 elections. The pattern of black-Jewish voting in regard to the candidacy of Carl McCall for comptroller of New York provides a first indication. McCall ran against a Jewish candidate, Herbert London, who started with major support among Jewish voters. But London cynically sought to exploit black-Jewish discord, a tactic that backfired, especially among Jews. A critical shift of Jewish suburban voters away from London, toward McCall, resulted in the election of the first African-American to an executive office in New York state.

Noteworthy too is that after the 92 percent black voter support for Democratic party candidates in 1994, the second largest Democratic vote came from the Jews, at 79 percent. After that was the Hispanic vote, 70 percent Democratic. These patterns suggest that it is indeed possible for blacks and Jews to put the past twenty-five years of contention behind them. The expanding neoracist and neonativist militancy in the Republican party demands that this be done. □

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Ian Robinson

GLOBALIZATION AND DEMOCRACY

Supporters of the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT) portrayed all these as mere extensions of trade liberalizing initiatives familiar in the United States since the dark days of the Great Depression. In keeping with this marketing strategy, they insisted on labeling them "free trade agreements"—a comforting term for many.

In fact, these agreements went far beyond the traditional purpose of free trade agreements: reducing quotas and tariff barriers to international trade in nonagricultural goods. Their central innovations lay in (1) the creation of new international property rights for foreign investors and intellectual innovators; (2) the creation of new legal restrictions on government regulations; and (3) the application of traditional GATT principles (that is, "national treatment" and "most favored nation") to trade in agricultural goods and all categories of services.

These innovations will substantially increase capital mobility. The movement toward uniform international property and regulatory regimes, based on principles deriving mainly from American law, will reduce the risks, complexity, and uncertainty of foreign investment for transnational corporations. It will now be easier and more attractive to shift investment from domestic to foreign sites. As this "exit" option becomes more credible, corporate bargaining power increases. This new leverage is already being used to demand reductions in taxes, regulations, and wages that are said to reduce profitability and competitiveness. Because their most important impact is the promotion of capital mobility, and with it, freedom from the constraints of democratic governments and unions, these deals are more appropriately called "free capital" than free trade agreements.

Whatever they are called, they go a long way toward the creation of a global "market economy," in Karl Polanyi's sense of that term.[1] Polanyi argued that the construction of national market economies—rather than industrialization—was the "Great Transformation" that the nations of Western Europe and North America underwent in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Prior to that transformation, national economies were aggregations of local and regional markets, governed by their own rules and customs, and interacting with one another only to a limited degree. The construction of national market economies required large-scale state initiatives of two basic sorts. First, the state had to tear down many of the old institutions that had regulated local and regional markets and impeded the free movement of land, labor, goods, services, and capital within the nation. Second, the state had to replace these with something new—comprehensive bodies of property, contract, tort, labor, corporate and competition law, together with new enforcement mechanisms.

Analogously, the free capital agreements can be understood as instruments that, in the name of reducing barriers to trade, alter or negate national laws, policies, and customs that stand in the way of the global market economy. At the same time, they create what amount to rudimentary international property, corporate, and competition laws, backed by the threat of trade sanctions against those who refuse to accept them. So understood, the agreements are the principal instrument of what we might term the Second Great Transformation—the shift from a world economy that is an aggregation of national market economies, quite varied in their regulatory and redistributive principles, to a global market economy governed by a uniform set of rules.

As with the first Great Transformation, so

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with the second: a market economy can be organized along laissez-faire lines or along lines that pay greater attention to its social and political costs. In Polanyi's formulation, what distinguished the laissez-faire or liberal approach to the construction of a national market economy in the United Kingdom was the insistence on treating land and labor as commodities, like corn or steel, with their values—rent and wages—determined by largely unregulated markets. Such a "self-regulating market," Polanyi argued, entailed tremendous costs—economic and social polarization—providing the political basis for successful attacks on democratic institutions by fascists on the right and communists on the left in many countries.

Democracy survived where it was long and well established, so that governments had to respond to popular demands for social democratic reforms —unemployment insurance and welfare benefits, the protection of basic workers' rights, Keynesian counter-cyclical macroeconomic policies, and so on—before economic and political polarization went too far.

The free capital agreements embody a laissez-faire approach to the regulation of the global market economy. However, like national market economies, a global market economy could also be governed by social democratic principles. A social democratic form of globalization would not aim to increase capital mobility and corporate property rights against governments as quickly as the new agreements do—if at all. Corporate capital was already highly mobile, by historical standards. From a social democratic perspective, the social dimension of international economic integration lags far behind already existing levels of capital mobility.

Two things are required to overcome this lag. First, the regulation of international competition among states and firms so as to yield socially and environmentally desirable outcomes. Second, the redistribution of a substantial part of the economic gains from globalization to those who are most in need and most vulnerable to the massive restructuring that globalization brings in its wake. These objectives should be the principal focus of binding, enforceable international agreements for the next ten or twenty years.

Neoliberal Globalization vs. Democracy

Neoliberals believe that their preferred form of globalization is the single best strategy for promoting stable and high quality democracies throughout the world. Their critics argued that NAFTA and Uruguay GATT—and, by extension, neoliberal globalization as a whole—would dilute and weaken democracy. Many of these critics focused on problems with the processes by which the agreements were negotiated and ratified. They argued that interested citizens and nonprofit organizations were excluded from the consultations with American corporations that shaped the U.S. bargaining position. Moreover, the American people never got an opportunity to ratify the new international economic constitution under which they and their government would have to live. Instead, the deals were hurried through Congress under a "Fast Track" process that allowed little time for evaluating long and complex texts and left no scope for amendment by the legislative branch. Many argued that there should have been national referendums—as with the Maastricht Treaty in France, Denmark, and Ireland.

There is merit in this critique. A referendum, in particular, would have disciplined political elites otherwise inclined to define the national economic interest as promoting the profitability of domestically owned transnational corporations. However, such procedural criticisms are not as far-reaching or important as two other types that received less attention in the course of the fight over NAFTA. The first of these looks at ways in which the free capital agreements narrow the scope of democratic control over social and economic policies, transferring authority over such things as the conditions under which firms may be bought, sold, or closed by foreign investors, from democratically accountable governments to the transnational corporations that control more and more of world trade. It is estimated that more than 25 percent of the world's economic activity now comes from the two hundred largest corporations. Up to 33 percent of all world trade, and more than 50 percent of all Canadian trade, takes place among different units of a single corporation, rather than among different firms.

The second criticism focuses on how neoliberal globalization is likely to affect economic

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inequality. International economic integration under neoliberal rules will tend to concentrate power and wealth in the hands of those who already have it, eroding the quality of democratic politics, and with it, the legitimacy of democratic political institutions. Where quality and legitimacy are already low, further erosion threatens to undermine the stability of democratic institutions as well.

Democratic Scope

Free capital agreements reduce the scope of democracy by transferring the power to make decisions on important social and economic issues to unaccountable supranational public and private bureaucracies. To date, most attention has been directed at the public face of this power transfer. For example, the central thrust of Ralph Nader's attack on the World Trade Organization (WTO), the body created to interpret and administer the Uruguay GATT, was that its operations violate basic due process norms:

> They include a lockout of the press and the public from WTO tribunals; suppression of the briefs and other documents presented by governments that are parties to disputes before these tribunals; denial of citizens' right to petition; the absence of conflict-of-interest standards for the tribunals' three trade specialists, who act as judges and may simultaneously pursue private business careers; and a prohibition of any independent appeals of WTO tribunal decisions. The perfunctory appeals process within the WTO is secret.[2]

These complaints are certainly valid, but the emphasis is questionable. Even the fairest, most open and transparent process, administered with perfect impartiality, will not generate good outcomes if the rules that supranational tribunals are required to interpret and enforce are inappropriate. Conversely, if these international agreements reflected a social democratic vision of globalization, rather than a neoliberal one, these flaws would be much less important.

The more fundamental problem is the devolution of democratic power to transnational corporations. The free capital agreements do this in two basic ways: first, through the legal restrictions they impose on the policies that governments may adopt; and second, through the market pressures that intensifying competition for scarce private investment imposes on national and subnational governments.

The most important new legal restrictions on democratic states have to do with investment, intellectual property rights, and technical standards. NAFTA's investment chapter, for example, prohibits a wide variety of "performance requirements"—that is, conditions that governments might require foreign investors to meet in return for the right to invest in a country.

Among other things, states are barred from requiring foreign investors to transfer technologies, and from mandating that a share of the materials used in production be locally purchased, or that production be geared to continental or world markets rather than strictly national ones, or that raw materials be processed to a certain level before export, or that a certain share of production be exported, or that a certain share of profits be locally reinvested. Such devices have been used by many countries seeking to catch up technologically, to diversify their economies, and to increase the value-added manufacturing potential of their raw materials.

Nor can governments create public corporations, embark upon new programs, or introduce new regulations that reduce the "reasonably expected" value of foreign investments without paying compensation, unless they wish to run the risk of trade sanctions. For example, if Ontario sought to introduce public auto insurance, on the model that currently exists in Manitoba, it would have to pay compensation to any American insurance companies that would lose business as a result. If Canada had not already had a national health insurance program, the same might have been true for American health insurance businesses operating in Canada. In countries where foreign corporations constitute a significant portion of a sector such as insurance, the necessity of paying such compensation could make new policies prohibitively expensive, whatever the public interest. The investment chapter also reduces restrictions on foreign ownership, even in such sensitive sectors as financial services. Thus, it paves the way for mergers and takeovers that could make these new property rights much more important over time.

NAFTA's intellectual property provisions are similarly restrictive. When Canada's minister of health announced that she would introduce legis-

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lation requiring that all cigarettes be sold in plain packages, Carla Hills (in her new incarnation as a big league international trade lawyer) appeared on behalf of American cigarette manufacturers to tell the Canadians that such a policy would constitute a "taking" of their intellectual property (specifically, their trademark). Unless fully compensated for the loss of sales that would result, such a "taking" violates NAFTA protections, and would open Canada to retaliation by the United States. Finally, the technical standards provisions of the free capital agreements make it significantly more difficult for governments to defend regulations more stringent than an international minimum, requiring them to demonstrate that a challenged regulation is the "least trade restrictive necessary" to achieve a "legitimate" public objective.

There is not space here for a comprehensive overview of all the new provisions that prevent democratic governments from regulating transnational corporations. Because neoliberals oppose "state intervention" in the economy, they see no sacrifice in the subordination of democratic governments to these rules. But the citizens and governments of democracies such as Canada were once free to disagree with neoliberal economic dogmas, and to pursue policies predicated on other assumptions, without having to pay corporate tribute or suffer U.S. trade sanctions. Now this will be much more difficult, even after they have thrown out governments espousing neoliberal ideas.

Heightened international capital mobility increases market constraints on governments, democratic or otherwise. These constraints are not confined to the items listed in the new legal texts. Tax policies, for example, are largely exempted from the free capital agreements, provided they are not used to give a competitive advantage to specific national producers. However, as most people recognize, tax policies are highly vulnerable to capital mobility. The United States has a long experience of municipalities and states bidding down their property and corporate taxes in the competition for private investment. This competition, and its negative impact on tax revenues and expenditures, has intensified within the United States in recent years. The free capital agreements encourage a parallel international competition among nation-states. Even before they began to bite, corporate taxes diminished as a share of total government revenues in twelve of seventeen OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Develoment) countries. The agreements can be expected to accelerate this trend.

The impact of increased capital mobility on corporate taxation is exactly paralleled by its impact on corporate regulation. Any regulation can become the object of downward market pressures simply by virtue of the fact that transnational corporations regard it as a cost. In the jargon of the European Union, this competitive bidding down of taxes and standards is called "social dumping." The ban on performance requirements protects corporations from competing against one another to give governments concessions in return for the right to invest. There is nothing to prevent governments from competing to offer concessions to corporations in return for their investment, and much that encourages it.

Democratic Quality and Stability

Such asymmetries exacerbate the inequalities in bargaining power between increasingly mobile transnational corporations, on the one hand, and immobile governments and unions on the other. These power inequalities, in turn, increase inequalities in wealth and income. The chief countermechanisms are state taxes and transfers in support of the "social wage" (that is, policies such as unemployment insurance, public health, and public education), and union-led collective bargaining. But the free capital agreements limit the state's capacity to fund the existing social wage, much less expand its scope through the introduction of new programs.

The capacity of unions to reduce or stabilize income inequality through collective bargaining is also weakened. Unions face transnational corporations from a much weaker bargaining position than national or subnational governments. Neoclassical economists have long recognized that trade liberalization can drive down wages in sectors where imports, produced by lower paid foreign workers, directly compete with domestic products. But the point here goes well beyond that. Any good or service that is domestically produced but *might* be produced elsewhere is vulnerable to

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corporate pressures to cut wages and benefits in order to reduce the attractiveness of shifting production overseas.

We can therefore expect substantial increases in income inequality. The experience of the last fifteen years supports this expectation. In this period, income inequality in the three countries that pursued neoliberal policies most rigorously—the United States, the United Kingdom, and New Zealand—increased more rapidly than in the other OECD countries. Among less developed countries, the region whose elites embraced neoliberal reforms most expansively—Latin America—also experienced substantial income redistribution away from the poor. Of the thirteen Latin American countries for which income distribution data at the beginning and end of the 1980s were available, the share of national income going to the poorest 20 percent of the population declined in nine. The average level of decline was 17.6 percent. Poverty also increased: the World Bank's "poverty index" for the Latin American region rose from 26.5 to 31.5 percent in this decade.[3]

Growing income inequality reduces the quality of democratic politics. It increases inequalities in political influence because access to financial resources, and associated goods such as leisure and education, are so important to effective political participation. This growing imbalance is likely to lead to policies favoring those that already have the most, setting in motion a vicious cycle of increasing political and economic inequality. Such a trend can provoke popular mobilization, with the result that the cycle of democratic decline is broken. But such mobilization is often met with repression, as in contemporary Guatemala. If popular reform efforts prove too weak to be effective, or are repressed, a growing number of citizens will become alienated from the political process. As this happens, more and more people become willing to cheat the system in one way or another. Corruption becomes widespread, further contributing to the delegitimation of democratic institutions.

If the quality of democracy is falling, the legitimacy of the regime can be expected to deteriorate. The regime then becomes more vulnerable to overthrow, whether from egalitarian insurgencies from below or from pre-emptive anti-egalitarian coups d'etat from above. Thus, rising inequality is strongly correlated with democratic instability. Edward Muller found that, controlling for per capita income levels, income inequality differences accounted for about 60 percent of the variation in democratic regime stability among thirty-three countries between 1960 and 1980. Democracy collapsed in all six of the countries in which the richest 20 percent of the population received more than 54 percent of national income.[4]

The upshot is that the higher the levels of economic inequality, the lower the quality of democracy, and the lower the quality, the more likely it is that democratic government will fail. The form of globalization promoted by the free capital agreements is likely to exacerbate the already rising inequalities attributable to neoliberal policies—anti-unionism, deregulation, privatization, tax cuts, monetarism, and so on—pursued in many countries since the late 1970s. Thus, contrary to the neoliberal conceit, far from promoting democratization, neoliberal globalization is likely to undermine many of the vulnerable new democracies that have emerged in the last fifteen years and to reduce the quality of democracy in the countries where it survives.

Social Democratic Globalization

A pro-democratic form of globalization would have to achieve three things. First, reduce the legal restrictions on democratic governments associated with the investor, intellectual property, and technical standards provisions briefly discussed above. Second, neutralize the social dumping pressures associated with the high levels of capital mobility that will exist in any global market economy. Third, create new mechanisms for redistributing a substantial portion of the economic gains from globalization to those individuals and nations most in need. The last two elements, taken together, are what Europeans call the "social dimension" of international economic integration.

A global social dimension, on the European model, would have two basic components: a social and environmental charter and structural funds. The charter would set out basic worker rights and labor and environmental standards that all members of the GATT, International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the other international organiza-

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tions would have to meet. The structural funds would transfer resources from those who gain from market restructuring to those who lose. They would also help pay for the upgrading of standards and infrastructure, and the promotion of economic development in depressed regions.

In the short run, any such international social dimension would be very limited. However, it could be large enough to make a difference, and it could be expanded over time. The European Union's social dimension—except for its agricultural price support system—started out very small. But as integration accelerated in the latter half of the 1980s, its structural funds doubled in size twice. By 1997, these funds will transfer about $68 billion U.S. dollars a year to poorer parts of the Union. If Canada and the United States had applied the pre-Maastricht formula to their poorer NAFTA partner, Mexico would be receiving $10 billion a year—about what it paid in interest on its foreign debt each year in the 1980s. Under the Maastricht formula, that amount would rise to $20 billion.

As we learned from the Clinton health care reform debacle, it is essential that even the most ambitious and far-reaching reforms be kept simple. In that spirit, I would propose a very simple global social charter to begin with. It would protect just four basic worker rights:

(1) the right to organize unions that members control democratically;

(2) the right to engage in collective bargaining and to strike when such bargaining does not resolve the issues;

(3) freedom from forced labor for prisoners and children; and

(4) freedom from discrimination in hiring, promotion, or remuneration.

This list is hardly adequate, but if unions were strong and democratic, their members would be able to mobilize in pursuit of stronger standards, as in the early industrializing countries. Conversely, one can have the best labor standards in the world on paper, but if unions are not free and democratic, standards will not be effectively monitored or enforced. Further progress will be possible internationally as the domestic balance of political power is altered in the less developed countries, increasing the receptiveness of their governments to a more comprehensive international social charter.

The revenue source for the structural funds, and the formula by which they would be allocated, could also be kept very simple. One intriguing candidate for this role is the tax on international currency transactions first proposed by Yale economist James Tobin in 1978.[5] Tobin recently estimated that, given the current volume of global currency transactions—about $1.28 trillion a day—a tax of 0.5 percent would yield approximately $1.5 trillion in revenues every year, even allowing for a 35 percent decline in the volume of transactions as a result of the tax. This is enough to eliminate the foreign debt of all less developed countries in about two years—and foreign debt is the lion's share of their government indebtedness. It could eliminate the entire U.S. national debt in a little more than three years and that of the rest of the developed countries in another three to four years.

In Phase One, lasting between eight and ten years if these estimates are correct, a global structural fund based on such a tax could be used to eliminate all of these debts. Thereafter, in Phase Two, it would be disbursed on a per capita basis to all qualifying countries. The Tobin tax would also reduce international currency speculation of the sort that undermined the European Monetary System and is currently exacerbating Mexico's economic difficulties. In the process, it would create more policy autonomy for central banks, which (under a new generation of administrators) might conceivably use that enhanced autonomy to reduce interest rates and unemployment—the principal underlying causes of rising national debt in the 1980s. Thus, the tax could also help to prevent a recurrence of such indebtedness.

To qualify for their share of the structural fund, governments would have to respect and protect the four basic labor rights that constitute the social charter. In addition, they would have to meet one political condition—they would have to be democracies. As with existing structural funds, these would be targeted to specific types of programs, such as universal public education and health care. The per capita principle of distribution that would operate in Phase Two is crude, but it is understandable and has a certain prima facie fairness to it—it treats one human life as equal to another. Moreover, given the current distribution of the world's

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population, and population growth trends, this principle would ensure that less developed countries got the lion's share of the structural funds in Phase Two. Since the developed countries hold most of the world's debt, they would be the principal beneficiaries of Phase One. There are thus incentives for both the North and the South to support such a plan.

Access to this money would create powerful incentives for countries that do not meet the conditions to move toward them. The certain prospect that such benefits would immediately be suspended would also create a powerful economic disincentive for right-wing elements considering a crack-down on democratic trade unions or military elites considering the overthrow of a democratic political regime.[6] Thus, while neoliberal globalization is hostile to democracy, social democratic globalization would both actively promote and help to fund the social preconditions of high quality democracy.

Political Prospects

Such a prodemocratic approach to globalization could not be implemented without the strong support of the United States. We should not be under any illusions as to the willingness of either the Republican or the Democratic parties, as they currently exist, to support such a vision. The labor and environmental side-deals to NAFTA revealed how far the Clinton administration was prepared to go on the social and environmental charter side of things. It will not accept binding international worker rights or minimum labor standards. Moreover, the administration may well retreat further under pressure from a Republican Congress that has recently declared that it will only support the extension of NAFTA to other countries if the side deals are not applied to the new entrants. As for the Tobin tax, even under the intense pressures of Republican budget cuts to core social programs and the Mexican peso crisis, the Clinton administration has not seen fit even to float the idea, much less to advocate it. Wall Street, needless to say, would not approve.

Nevertheless, other countries are beginning to take the lead on these issues. In the last year, France has been at least as vocal as the United States in calling for a social charter component to GATT. France might well support a more serious social charter than that which the Clinton administration secured in the NAFTA side deals. Canada's finance minister, in the wake of the worst social program cuts in postwar history, announced that he would seek to place the Tobin tax on the agenda of the next G-7 summit, scheduled for June 1995. He did not say how he thought the revenues from the tax ought to be distributed. The United Nations Development Program's most recent annual report also proposed the Tobin tax as a means for funding an international social dimension. This proposal was endorsed by French president Francois Mitterrand at the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, on March 11.

In any event, the point at this stage is not to convince mainstream parties, tied all too closely to corporate interests, that it makes economic sense to promote social democratic globalization. A more promising strategy is to demonstrate to democratic publics that the neoliberal form of globalization is not natural, inevitable, or desirable. Success in this regard will undercut the hegemony that neoliberal economic ideas currently enjoy. Putting a simple yet radical alternative form of globalization on the political agenda weakens their standard argument—"there is no alternative."

Pushing the Tobin tax proposal is useful in this context. We should acknowledge that the tax is no panacea. The amount of money it would raise, and how much of this sum would actually be paid by currency speculators, will have to be better researched and debated. But the unwillingness of Democrats and Republicans alike even to discuss the idea, much less put resources into researching it, is revealing. It suggests that neither party wants a relatively quick and clean resolution to the debt "crisis" that has become their principal justification for dismantling popular social programs and refusing to embark on new initiatives. If they did, they would be exploring all their options—including the Tobin tax and other forms of international corporate tax treaties—before determining that the only viable response is to cut spending on education, welfare transfers, school lunches, and the like.

Skeptics will argue that no nation can unilaterally impose such a tax successfully, and that is true. But the major economic powers spent almost a decade negotiating the last GATT. How much time have they devoted to negotiating the kind of tax base

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needed to cope with the human costs of the economic restructuring that this new GATT will accelerate? The answer, of course, is not one hour. Do our current elites want to eliminate these debts or not? Candid neoliberals will reply, "But what would discipline democratic populations if their national debts were erased?" Indeed. Democracies in the North and South alike would be able to build the more humane economy that most of their citizens desire, and pay for it too. We need to put neoliberals in a position where they have to be candid about the wellsprings of the sado-monetarism they practice on us, and the Tobin tax is useful for this purpose.

Only by exposing the coercive and anti-democratic character of neoliberalism can we create the political space in which to pursue progressive economic and social policies, whether domestically or internationally. Challenging the myths of globalization is where we must begin. The left will get nowhere with the electorate as long as our position—more or less explicit—is: "We accept the neoliberal premises about the character and dynamics of globalization, but we reject the need to make the cuts that logically follow from them." As long as we're stuck in that mold, we look like nice, well-intentioned people who won't face up to the nasty new realities. Democratic Leadership Conference types will then declare that there is no realistic alternative on their left, while they are to be preferred to the Republicans because they will implement the necessary neoliberal reforms more humanely.

The principal vehicle for getting a different message to the public must be the array of social movements and nonprofit organizations that cooperated in the struggle against NAFTA and Uruguay GATT. This "common front" included the labor movement, most of the environmental movement (particularly with GATT), family farm organizations, consumer protection groups, women's and student organizations, anti-poverty coalitions, international development organizations, and religious groups promoting human rights, peace and development. Together, these movements and organizations represent a substantial part of the American population. Many of the equivalent organizations, and some others besides, opposed the free capital agreements in Canada and Mexico as well. Thus, there is also great potential for international alliances against neoliberal globalization.

For many of the leaders and activists in these organizations, their cooperation in the fight against NAFTA and Uruguay GATT began as a marriage of convenience. But by the end of the NAFTA fight, a consensus was emerging that the common enemy was neoliberal globalization rather than any particular trade deal, and they had begun to work on developing a common alternative to that vision. The most detailed expression of this vision to date is "A Just and Sustainable Trade and Development Initiative for the Western Hemisphere" (November 1994), developed by the Alliance for Responsible Trade, the Citizens Trade Campaign, and the Mexican Action Network on Free Trade. The document has also been endorsed by the umbrella group for Canadian opposition to the free capital agreements, the Action Canada Network.[7]

It is too early to know whether this vision can inspire the "common front" of social movements that will be necessary if the social democratic vision of globalization is to prevail politically in the United States. But many activists in these movements are coming to the conclusion that they must now dedicate themselves to this end. We must do everything we can to strengthen the political tendency they represent. □

Notes

[1] See Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957).

[2] Ralph Nader, "Drop the GATT," *The Nation* (October 10, 1994), pp. 368-9.

[3] See World Bank, *Poverty and Income Distribution in Latin America: The Story of the 1980s* (Washington: Technical Dept., Latin America and the Caribbean, 1993), pp. 16, 48, 58.

[4] Edward Muller, "Democracy, Economic Development and Income Inequality," 53 *American Sociological Review* (February 1988), pp. 50-68.

[5] James Tobin, "A Proposal for International Monetary Reform," 4 *Eastern Economic Journal* (1978), pp. 153-9.

[6] This scheme is outlined in more detail in Ian Robinson, "The NAFTA Labor Accord in Canada: Experience, Prospects and Alternatives, " *Connecticut Journal of International Law* (Summer 1995), forthcoming. This essay also sketches and responds to six common objections to a strong international social dimension.

7. It is available from the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington, D.C. Phone: 202-234-9382.

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H. Brand

THE WELFARE STATE AT RISK

The welfare state is about security. It is about employment security, income security, and communal stability. It is premised on macro-economic policies designed to mitigate the business cycle and its employment and income effects and to ensure that advancing technologies and productivity do not for long disemploy workers. It was never conceived as a mere "safety net"; it is not about aid to the poor. Quite the contrary: aid to the poor was to disappear along with poverty. Doubt may arise concerning the last statement. But Old Age and Survivor Insurance has nearly done away with poverty among the aged. In Germany, Sweden, Norway, and the United Kingdom, poverty is not permitted to exist among families with young children, in striking contrast to the United States.[1] This contrast is unlikely to diminish soon, for our welfare state has fallen on evil times. Its meaning as an agent of social solidarity has ceased to be widely understood, and is frequently derogated. It is increasingly at risk.

The most direct indicator of such risk is the rise of the budgetary deficit as avatar of anti-welfare politics. Welfare state programs in the United States do not account for the budget deficit, but they are inextricably involved in the politics surrounding attempts to overcome it.

Labor Market Deregulation

There is another, less visible factor that has undermined the political strength of the welfare state: the indirect deregulation of the labor market. Deregulation aims at the elimination of "rigidities" imposed by trade unions in establishing wage floors, job descriptions and related wage rates, seniority rights, controls on hiring and firing, and other limitations upon management rights. The campaign to make labor markets—including those internal to the larger companies—more "flexible" is at the core of the decline of the U.S. labor movement. Union inability to maintain membership and win National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) elections is due in large part to the increasing difficulty of getting the board to hold an election, and to employers' challenges to the election process. Perhaps more important, "union avoidance" consultants have proliferated, and have helped develop sophisticated defenses against union organizing. Indeed, employers have in some cases initiated decertification procedures, and have won in the majority of the ensuing elections.

In neoclassical economic theory, wages, construed as prices, would find their own level absent "rigidities"; they would "clear" the market. Labor markets, then, would operate like "other" commodity markets. Unemployment is conceived as essentially voluntary. The unemployed worker need merely accept the wage that results from competition among jobseekers, or between employers and jobseekers, to obtain work. Were the labor market to operate according to the competitive model, full employment would be achieved, or nearly so. Failing that, wage inflation will set in. Economic theory suggests the appropriate remedy: increased unemployment. That has been precisely the policy of the Federal Reserve since the late 1970s. Together with the deliberate weakening of the unions, it has succeeded. What is more, unemployment insurance, so the logic of the theory goes, is an incentive to remain unemployed for the duration of benefits. Proponents of the competitive model have therefore advocated the reduction of benefits, stricter eligibility rules, and so on.

The pressure of "free trade" upon wage levels has been another factor in deregulating labor markets. Global service and commodity markets became a more active field of capitalist expansion beginning in the mid-1970s. The ratio of total foreign trade (exports plus imports) to the U.S. Gross

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Domestic Product (GDP) climbed from 9 percent in 1960 to 21 percent in 1991. The growing dependence of the economy on foreign trade evidenced by that rising ratio, and U.S. investment abroad in plant and equipment (a major stimulant of exports), have been accompanied by ceaseless insistence upon competitiveness. Pressure on wage levels has not been a primary purpose of the expansionary drive, but it has surely been one of its effects. "The decline in the exchange rate of the dollar and slow growth of wages in the U.S. made the country a lower wage competitor relative to several other advanced countries..." writes the Commission on the Future of Worker-Management Relations. "Lower paid workers in the U.S. earn markedly less than comparable workers in Western Europe." Such workers make up roughly half of the American work force.[2]

Merchandise trade imports have exceeded exports in every year but one over the past twenty years; in 1993, the deficit on the balance of trade ran close to $133 billion. The severity of the *direct* impact of foreign trade on jobs and wages in the United States is in controversy among economists. But its leverage—its indirect effect on wage levels—where workers fear job loss unless their employers meet import competition, cannot be doubted.

Not everyone will accept my use of the term labor market deregulation, for in fact the workplace has come to be more regulated over the past thirty years than ever before. Examples include the prohibition of discrimination because of race, sex, handicap, and so on; protection of pension rights; occupational health and safety laws; bans on wrongful dismissal; the Family and Medical Leave Act; and required notice of plant closings and mass layoffs. These laws are often weak or hard and expensive to enforce. Nevertheless, they mitigate the treatment of workers as commodities.

They do not ensure or enhance the collective or, if you will, the class power of labor. They do not secure "equality of bargaining power between employers and employees," as stipulated by Congress under the Wagner Act of 1935. The pressure on wages and benefits from the factors outlined, as well as from changing technologies and organizations of production, and the deskilling often incident to them, have not been effectively countered by government programs, such as public employment at prevailing rates of compensation. Since the Johnson administration's War on Poverty, government efforts have been confined to financial support of education and training of displaced and underpaid workers—that is, to the supply side of the labor market. Unless the demand side is also addressed, such efforts will fail, as indeed they have over the past thirty years. The resistance of business to an active labor market policy has remained insurmountable, with "laissez-faire" or "free market" ideology fueling that resistance. It constitutes a grave threat to the welfare state.

The Deficit

The federal deficit has been widely defined as the central problem of budgetary policy, the root cause of the supposedly low rate of savings, and hence of the presumably low rate of capital investment in the United States. The low rate of investment in turn, so it has been said, has been the chief reason for the slowed advance in productivity (output per hour), and therefore of the low rate of economic growth and real income.

The link between these variables and the deficit is dubious but politically potent. Arguments based on it are not only of questionable validity but cloak ideological and material interests seeking to curb government, privatize social services, and reduce taxes.

Let me briefly review certain fiscal features of the welfare state before dealing with the deficit arguments. The idea of financing welfare state programs from the resources that economic growth would generate arose only in the 1960s (the resources were dubbed "the fiscal dividend" by Walter Heller, then chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers). In its origins, the welfare state was not predicated upon economic growth, either in the United States or elsewhere. It arose from certain political constellations, forged by economic crisis, war, and the militancy of the left. Welfare state programs were not to be dependent upon government revenues and their increment. Any such dependence was rejected, especially by U.S. labor, as impairing the "earned right" of income support, which only the social insurance principle would safeguard.

The principle, however, could not be sustained in its conventional form. The payments it allowed

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were too small to obviate the continued need for old-age assistance. It also required large-scale funding to cover risk probabilities. But the funds this would have involved were so large that business leaders and conservative senators objected to their likely dominance of the capital markets, nearly "socializing" them. The social insurance system was therefore placed on a pay-as-you-go basis, beginning in 1939.

As part of the War on Poverty, Social Security benefits were raised during the 1960s and early 1970s, both absolutely and relative to preretirement earnings. They were also tied to the Consumer Price Index. Old people were thus definitively liberated from the dictates of the labor market. Poverty rates among them declined precipitately. In 1993, absent Social Security benefits, the poverty rate among persons sixty-five and above would have been more than twice as high as the actual reported rate of 12.4 percent. Even so, the median income of households with a head sixty-five years old or over was $17,000 in 1991 according to census data; two-thirds of such households had incomes of $25,000 or less. Only 10 percent had incomes of $50,000 or more, compared with 26 percent for all households. The notion that the aged are generally affluent is false.

The increases in benefits were based on projections of continued rising wages and salaries financing the required growth in payroll tax revenue. Neither projection materialized; unemployment rose, causing tax revenues to rise less than predicted. And inflation exceeded projections. Hence, a "crisis" in Social Security, which, was resolved by various, relatively minor adjustments. The politics of that crisis cannot concern us here; but the moral basis of Social Security came more and more under scrutiny. It was no longer to be understood as "an earned right." It was more simply "a transfer from the working population to the nonworking population—community support for the elderly in retirement," preserving "the social fabric of the country."[3]

Preserving the social fabric of the country is not, however, the function only of Social Security. It is or ought to be the function of the budget as such. The budget is the single most important vehicle for the allocation and redistribution of resources. The politics surrounding these allocational and distributional functions determine the limits of "the imperialism of the market" (the expression is the late Arthur Okun's). The huge deficit weakens those functions, although not for the reasons usually advanced. It contributes to, and makes the economy more dependent upon, excessive consumption and needless private investment. It also reduces the political space for new, socially useful initiatives. Preventing such initiatives, however, has been an aim of Republican administrations since the early 1980s, and the deliberate enlargement of the deficit a way of achieving it.

Over the past 35 years, central government budget deficits rose in the United States as well as in other advanced countries. In the 1960s, an era of strong economic growth, social programs were initiated whose financing could not be sustained without incurring deficits in the 1970s, when growth slackened and tax revenues fell short of the expenditures that had been obligated. For the United States, the budget deficit rose from 0.5 percent of the GDP in the 1960s to 2.1 percent in the 1970s. In the 1980s, the ratio doubled (it has remained at that level into the mid-1990s); but its steep rise cannot be attributed to social expenditures. It was occasioned by continued slow growth; big tax cuts billed as incentives to entrepreneurship and investment, which had no such effect; and an outlandish buildup of U.S. military power.

What do deficits signify other than a shortfall between tax revenues and expenditures?

1. They have added enormously to the public debt. An astounding phenomenon: between 1946 and 1976, a period during which two major wars were fought, the public debt doubled. Over the succeeding two decades, a period without war, it mounted by a factor of nine. The debt had declined as a percent of GDP throughout the post-World War II period; in 1980, the ratio was around 27 percent. By 1994, the ratio had nearly doubled to 52 percent of a much larger GDP.

2. The rise of the public debt has driven the deficit. Interest paid on the debt, averaging around 8 percent of total unified budget outlays in the 1970s, rose to more than 15 percent by 1993. It needs no comment that such an interest burden restricts new governmental initiatives.

3. The Federal Reserve Board sharply raised interest rates during the 1980s, largely so as to

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offset the inflationary effects it feared would result from the deficit. Real long-term rates ran 5½ percentage points higher than their earlier postwar averages—a huge increase by any historical standard. This of course added to the interest burden of the public debt (or the size of the deficit). It is worth recalling that during the immediate post-World War II years, the U.S. Treasury strongly resisted the Federal Reserve's inclination to raise interest rates, so as to keep the cost of the public debt within bounds. Not until 1951 was the "independence" of the Federal Reserve conceded, and monetary policy restored.

For government officials in Germany, whose public debt and deficit experience has been similar to that of the United States, "the loss of fiscal and political 'maneuverability' was one of the most significant factors in [making] ... budget deficit reduction a top priority. ... The 'maneuverability' effect was the most immediate problem posed by the debt burden because it seriously limited the political system's ability to respond to public needs."[4] This attitude contrasts starkly to deficit reduction policy in the United States, aimed as it is at constricting if not doing away altogether with social welfare programs.

4. It is nonsense to insist that the public debt constitutes a burden on coming generations. Both the payers defraying the interest and the Treasury bondholders receiving it belong to the same generation (although one-fifth of the public debt is held by foreigners). Moreover, part of the debt has been incurred to develop human and physical capital—assets whose wealth-producing value is bequeathed to future generations.

5. The deficit contributes to the regressiveness of income distribution. In 1990, 3 percent of individuals reporting income of $100,000 or more received 30 percent of the interest reported on all tax returns. Another 13 percent of returns reporting income between $50,000 and $100,000 received 22 percent of all interest. The distribution of interest received from Treasury instruments likely parallels that of all interest.

Pressures to Retrench

Business and its allies have always favored a balanced federal budget as a constraint upon government spending. By the same token, business has resisted the expansion of welfare-state programs. Its early support of Social Security was in part motivated by the room it would make for younger, more adaptable workers, and by its self-financing nature. Agricultural interests, particularly in the South, long resisted the entitlement of farm labor to Social Security. The 1980s were not a true exception to business's opposition to deficits, for the Reagan deficits built up the warfare rather than the welfare state, provided tax cuts for upper-income groups, and attempted to curtail welfare state programs.

More sophisticated and influential arguments have been advanced against the growing budget deficit than those based on mere ideological resistance to the reach of government. They derive from the economy's presumed broader needs for saving and capital investment, and they thereby cast doubt upon the affordability of welfare state programs. These arguments have most recently been stated, or restated, by the Bipartisan Commission on Entitlement and Tax Reform.[5] The commission's proposals have in many respects been overtaken in their right-wing radicalism by congressional legislation. If finally adopted, the former as well as the latter would spell a massive transfer of resources to capital. True, some of the commission's proposals are progressive. But the overall tendency is regressive, no less so than the Republicans' "Contract With America." It is, as Robert Kuttner has written, "an ideological assault, masquerading as fiscal prudence and generational compassion."

Let us briefly deal with the commission's underlying argument. As suggested, its importance lies not least in the aura of reasonableness that (at the time of writing) congressional cutbacks in social programs entirely lack.

The commission states that budget deficits "consume private savings that are needed for domestic investment, productivity, and job creation." It traces the magnitude of the (current) deficit to the growth of entitlement programs. Its line of attack is radically focused on these programs, which it proposes to curtail or tax or cap. Thus, the deficit would diminish or disappear. Private savings and investment would presumably be restored to whatever their "normal" level is.

The argument recalls the myth of a capital shortage propagated by business spokespeople and

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respectable economists during the 1970s, and later rejected in authoritative essays published by the Federal Reserve. Let me merely note here that the preponderance of what is termed gross savings originates in corporate business; it consists mainly of undistributed profits and capital consumption allowances (depreciation set-asides). External sources of funds account for a much smaller share of total corporate funds (17 percent in 1993). The commission claims that, as net savings have contracted, so has the growth rate of net investment—the part that exceeds the replacement of capital, paid for by depreciation set-asides. (The distinction between net and gross makes little real difference, for obsolete plants and equipment are not merely replaced; the replacements are invariably more efficient and productive.)

Blatantly contradicting this claim is the fact that between the recession trough of 1991-92 and the end of 1994, investment spending on producer durable goods rose at an average annual rate of nearly 13 percent—notwithstanding the deficit's hitting a post-World War II high in relation to GDP during the period.

In text and chart the commission misleadingly links entitlements with the deficit and interest on the public debt. It is true that Social Security and Medicare have risen as a percent of GDP. (And why not?) Yet, Social Security and Medicare trust fund receipts (which are part of the "unified" budget) have been invariably larger than outgos: a $100 billion trust fund surplus partially offset the $355 billion so-called general fund deficit in 1993. The implied agenda of the commission in effect parallels the (likewise implied) agenda of the sponsors of the Balanced Budget Amendment to the Constitution: Social Security would become just another discretionary item in the budget rather than an enforceable right, subject only to the eligibility of the claimant.

Among the "reforms" that commission members have proposed are the capping of cost-of-living allowances for only the lowest 20 percent of the benefit distribution, which would erode the purchasing power of benefits above this quintile; the taxation of Medicare Part A and the assessment of monthly premiums; and the raising of the retirement age to 70. The evolution of Social Security into a retirement wage would cease and be reversed; the universality of the system, a major barrier against benefits being means-tested, would be impaired. The underlying principle of the system, linking benefits to work experience rather than need, would be imperiled, possibly destroyed. A larger number of elderly persons would be exposed to the dictates of the labor market.

Poverty

It is emblematic of the decline of the welfare state that poverty in the United States has persisted and even increased steadily in recent years. Falling wages and declining job opportunities especially for lower skilled workers are the chief causes. Since the mid-1970s, when the deregulation of labor markets began, employment policy has ceased being a public priority. Large numbers of workers have been disadvantaged by technological and locational changes, the financial and psychological burdens of which they have had to shoulder alone. Poverty is not a natural disaster. It is a function of the inadequacy and, more recently, of the retreat of the welfare state.

In 1993, 39.3 million persons, or 15 percent of the population, were poor. Individuals or families are classed as poor if their annual cash income falls below an officially defined poverty line. The line is fixed by a household budget composed by the Department of Agriculture forty year ago for "emergency situations," and subsequently adopted by the Social Security Administration to measure the extent of poverty. The budget is updated annually for price changes and adjusted for household size. It does not reflect changing patterns of consumption (for example, the need for a telephone, today as indispensable as the electric light). It runs far below the amount required for minimally adequate resources. If minimal adequacy is defined as one-half of the median household income—a standard widely accepted by scholars and social-work professionals—then the AFDC and food stamp benefit of a family of three in the United States averaged but one-third of that standard in 1994.[6]

True, poverty is relieved by the extent to which noncash benefits like public housing or rent subsidies supplement cash income. But "only 23 percent [of families receiving AFDC] lived in public housing or received some form of housing subsidy" in 1992. The poor are in principle eligible

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for Medicaid. In New York City, however, 36 percent of them are deemed ineligible. A similar pattern holds for food stamps. In the fiscal year 1993, governments at all levels spent $69 billion in cash and noncash benefits—"yet the system left most of its families still poor," according to the Budget of the United States for Fiscal 1995. No wonder!

The Center on Social Welfare Policy and Law reported in June 1994 that AFDC and food stamps together ran below the poverty line in every state of the union; in forty-two states they amounted to less than 74 percent of that line, and in most states they were below the state's own definition of the minimum needed for basic living costs. Moreover, and this speaks to the long-term deterioration of welfare state support for the poor, "current AFDC benefits are worth less than 1975 benefits in every state. . . . Between . . . 1972 and 1992, the combined value of AFDC and food stamps for a three-person family dropped 26 percent on average ... to $649" (in inflation-adjusted dollars).

Income maintenance and support do of course reduce what would otherwise be a (pretransfer) poverty rate of 22 percent (as of 1993). Even so, tens of millions of people live in conditions irreconcilable with common decency, unable to share in the life of community and to maintain their sense of self-respect.

Whether AFDC, food stamps, housing subsidies, Medicaid, and other transfers will remain entitlements adequate to reduce the post-transfer poverty rate is doubtful. Cutbacks and procedural changes in the administration, and payouts of transfers currently proposed, may yet be modified, but the proposals *indicate the tendency*, which is to expose the weakest members of American society not only to aggravated impoverishment but to destitution. Among indications are

- The House of Representatives proposes to reduce the cost of the food stamp program 21 percent by the fiscal year 2000. The nutritional adequacy of food stamp benefits would decline by more than 10 percent.
- AFDC, like Food Stamps, would be converted into block grants to the states. Funding would be fixed (that is, capped); it would not rise if wages decline or recession and unemployment ensue. Block grants for the relief of need imply a denial that poverty is a national problem, arising from causes rarely associated with purely local conditions, and requiring national approaches, federal funds, and federal standards.
- No new funding will go for welfare-to-work initiatives. Resources for child care are reduced. The mutual responsibility principle that has underlain the 1988 Family Support Act is abandoned.
- Although non-entitlement (or "discretionary") programs for low-income people account for but 12 percent of all discretionary funding, these programs have suffered cuts of 66 percent in the House, and 55 percent in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

Insecurity and Unemployment

"Slack labor markets and poverty tend to go hand in hand," writes Isabel Sawhill.[7] It is an argument for full employment. The rate of unemployment has run mostly above 6 percent in the years since the early 1970s. The average duration of unemployment, indicating the difficulty or ease in obtaining work, has similarly been high compared with earlier phases of the business cycle. The unemployment figures don't, however, reflect growing job insecurity, with its depressing effects on incomes.

Growing job insecurity during the 1980s and 1990s is indicated by declines in the continuity of employment for men and women in their prime working age (for reasons of space, the illustrative data here apply only to men). The proportion of white men working full time, the year round, dropped from 79 percent in the 1970s to 71 percent in the 1980s; that of black men from 70 percent to 50 percent—indicating severe losses in earnings. The drop in employment continuity was even more pronounced in the lowest wage quintile, where only 30 percent held full-time, year-round jobs during the 1980s, as against 51 percent in the 1970s.

Similarly, the proportion of men whose earnings *declined* during the later decade rose to 36 percent from 24 percent earlier, the proportion of male black losers rising to nearly one-half, as against one-third earlier. There were gainers of course, but it is clear that workers in the 1980s were far more liable to experience poverty than in the 1970s.

Another risk associated with job insecurity is the displacement of workers owing to plant clos-

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ings, slack work, or abolition of jobs or shifts. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics has collected and published such data since the early 1980s. In 1992, 5.6 million workers, all of whom had at least three years of tenure, suffered "displacement." Only two-thirds of them regained employment; close to one-quarter reported being unemployed (looking for work), the remainder withdrew from the labor force (they were too discouraged or regarded themselves as being too old to find new jobs). A large proportion of re-employed workers were compelled to accept lower pay in their new jobs. Thus, displacement, which occurs mostly as a consequence of employer dominance of the labor market, threatens many workers with poverty.

Since the late 1970s and early 1980s, the unemployment insurance system has become restrictive. In earlier decades, Congress had encouraged the states to expand program coverage, pay better and longer benefits, and reduce harsh disqualifications. Thereafter, driven in part by the growing federal deficit and the deteriorating unemployment insurance trust fund, Congress imposed restrictions that resulted in significantly reduced benefits; and the proportion of the unemployed entitled to benefits also fell. Unemployment benefits began to be taxed as income; the ratio of unemployment compensation to the average wage declined.

It is a sign of the system's decay that the proportion of the unemployed receiving benefits dropped from 55 percent in 1952 to 29 percent in 1984; and that the rate remained at "historically low levels" throughout the 1980s. Although it rose to 40 percent in 1991, a recession year, that was still far below the rate during previous recessions. Had the unemployment recipiency rate and benefit payments in the early 1990s been at the same level as in the mid-1970s, "about $20 billion more in ... benefits would have been available to stabilize the economy and maintain a portion of the incomes of the unemployed," states a General Accounting Office report.[8] Stabilizing the economy has been conceived as a key function of unemployment insurance since its inception—an "automatic stabilizer" that would help bolster employment even as it supported the incomes of jobless workers. That function has been in effect dismissed under the impact of "free-market" labor theories hostile to the system's underlying social purposes.

Recurrent appeals for greater public and private support for job retraining are based on a critical fact: a vastly larger proportion of unemployed workers have permanently lost their jobs rather than being on temporary layoff, as in earlier years. In addition, real-wage differentials have been widening between skilled and less skilled workers, and between more- and less-educated workers. In a disturbing speech delivered in September 1994, Secretary of Labor Robert Reich stated that fifteen years earlier, a male college graduate earned 49 percent more than a man with only a high school degree; by 1992, the differential had risen to 83 percent. The purpose of Reich's speech was to appeal to his audience to upgrade training efforts and invest more in human capital. Yet, a large part of the audience consisted of representatives of firms that have "downsized" not only less skilled workers but professionals with substantial educational background. That is not an argument against retraining. It simply means that although retraining efforts, such as they are, address the supply side of the labor market, Reich and his associates, no doubt persons of good will, are powerless to match this to the demand side. It is an inescapable predicament when the demand for workers is determined mainly by private employers, and public policy fails to underwrite full employment.

Justice

If the welfare state is at risk, so is social justice. It is obvious that, at present, the risk is not intensified by capitalist crisis. American capitalism and its beneficiaries are doing better than ever. Disposable personal income, for example, came to $19,000 per capita, an all-time high even after adjusting for changes in purchasing power. The share of aggregate household income of the top quintile has consistently expanded over the past two decades, to 48.2 percent in 1993; that of the bottom quintile has as consistently contracted, to 3.6 percent. Shareholder wealth, as indicated by the value of stocks traded on the New York Stock Exchange, has nearly quadrupled since 1980. Mere paper values? Such wealth is firmly anchored in the economic pre-eminence of American corporations. And the actions of these corporations lie at the root of inequity: "(I)n recent years, some of America's largest companies have dramatically

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pared down the share of revenues going to workers by boosting productivity, cutting jobs, holding down wages, and outsourcing," states *Business Week*.[9]

These kinds of corporate actions must be resisted. We could do worse than using the following words from President Woodrow Wilson's first inaugural address as a guide to such resistance:

> The first basis of government is justice. There can be no equality or opportunity, the first essential of justice in the body politic, if men and women and children be not shielded in their lives, their very vitality, from consequences of great industrial and social processes which they cannot alter, control, or singly cope with. Society must see to it that it does not itself crush or weaken or damage its own constituent parts. The first duty of law is to keep sound the society it serves.

The first duty of law has been increasingly neglected, even rejected. Yet, it is simply to paraphrase Wilson to say that the idea of the welfare state is social solidarity. The welfare state is meant to bear at least part of the human costs of technological and industrial change, and to help repair historical ills that might otherwise be visited upon succeeding generations. Today, it seems as if but a few devoted people on the left understand this, and that meanness of spirit governs the land. That will not endure. To attend once again to "the first duty of law" remains our urgent task. □

Notes

[1] See T. Smeeding et al., "Patterns of Income and Poverty: The Economic Status of Children and the Elderly in Eight Countries," in John L. Palmer et al., eds., *The Vulnerable*, (Washington: The Urban Institute Press, 1988), Table 5.11, p. 111.

[2] Commission on the Future of Worker-Management Relations, *Fact Finding Report* (Washington: U.S. Departments of Labor and Commerce, May 1994), pp. 5, 19.

[3] Edward J. Harpham, "Fiscal Crisis and the Politics of Social Security Reform," in Anthony Champagne and Edward J. Harpham, eds., *The Attack on the Welfare State* (Prospect Heights, Ill.: Waveland Press, 1984), p.22.

[4] U.S. General Accounting Office, *Deficit Reduction: Experience of Other Nations*, December 1994, p. 126.

[5] Bipartisan Commission on Entitlement and Tax Reform Meeting, June 13, 1994. See *Discussion Document* on Entitlement Reform, p. 1 ff. See also, *Staff Report on Entitlement Reform Options: Reference Materials*, December 1994.

[6] See Center on Social Welfare Policy and Law, *Living at the Bottom: An Analysis of 1994 AFDC Benefit Levels*. Washington and New York, June 1994, p. 28. See also pp. 20, 9, 10.

[7] Isabel V. Sawhill, "Poverty in the United States: Why Is It So Persistent?" *Journal of Economic Literature*, September 1988, p. 1112.

[8] U.S. G.A.O., *Labor Issues*. Transition Series. December 1992. Washington, p. 24.

[9] *Business Week*, Jan. 30, 1995, p. 87.

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Peter Laarman

RELIGIOUS RIGHT THRIVES IN A RED-HOT VACUUM

Leo Ribuffo's mild rebuke of the left's typical response to American religiosity ("Religion, Politics, and the Latest Christian Right," *Dissent*, Spring 1995)—a response of horrified incomprehension—gets most of it right. But Ribuffo doesn't address in any depth the sources of conservative Protestantism's resurgent grip on the loyalties of millions of our citizens. Ribuffo also doubts that the ascendancy of the "latest Christian right" is anything to be particularly exercised about, whereas I think it's more dangerous than previous incarnations, simply because the cultural situation is more dangerous.

For progressive politics to succeed, we will need more than Ribuffo's proposed truce in the war of rhetoric between progressives and leaders of the religious right. We will need to adopt an organizer's perspective toward the movement's rank and file: the folks who trundle off with the kids to the newly built "multifunctional" church with the big parking lot on the outskirts of town. We will need to focus on the social location at which conservative religion and politics are fused.

To borrow Ted Solataroff's phrase of thirty years ago, the political mobilization of evangelical and fundamentalist churchgoers thrives in the red-hot vacuum created by the breakdown of other mediating institutions, by the trashiness and weightlessness of popular culture, and by the sham character of today's corporate-funded politics—our repellent Tweedledum and Tweedledee show. I will treat each of these background factors briefly, then turn to the big lure in lurid religion: its vision of a new heaven and a new earth. I will propose, with some trepidation, that the left needs a *soupçon* of messianism in order to flourish in what Harold Bloom aptly calls a "religion-drenched" American culture.

The muting of civil discourse that accompanies the meltdown of other mediating institutions goes a long way toward explaining how conservative churches become totalizing institutions in the lives of their adherents. In most parts of the country, the old gathering spots, the old conversation sites—the union hall, the vets' hall, the corner market, the PTA group, the political club—have all fallen silent. Americans no longer engage in face-to-face conversations that allow them to process political and economic news with their own voices and in their own words. E-mail and talk radio can never replace such "back porch" political discourse because communication through these media never occurs as part of the natural rhythm of life. Rather, these are media that tend to attract individuals with urgent ego needs or private obsessions: they are natural vehicles for cranks.

In a society in which too many citizens don't know who their neighbors are—and don't care to know unless the neighbor's children would make suitable playmates for their own—the totalizing church becomes a substitute neighborhood, a substitute political club, a substitute source of identity and confirmation. The people thronging to the Church of Galloping Christ (or whatever) recognize that something is drastically *wrong* with wired mass-media culture: the culture of television, video games, and omnipresent amplified music. So-called "gangsta rap" at least identifies itself for what it is, but the stupid, sleazy, cynical, violent stuff that passes for mainstream television programming carries no such plain label: it's just "what's on." Of course, this material becomes especially deadly because there's no conversation around it and no possibility of conversation. It's

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too banal even to *invite* an articulated response.

What people who have stopped reading and stopped speaking to one another experience is something akin to *weightlessness:* not only have the daily rhythms of interaction and conversation been suspended, but in their place the electronic culture offers only the passive consumption of schlock or the active discharge of bile by means of talk radio. The conservative totalizing church knows exactly what to do in this situation: it disperses the oppressive blue haze of cultural ennui in a flash by denouncing certain parts of the electronic culture as the devil's work while supplying its own firm structure of (divinely given) meanings.

In case the collapse of other mediating institutions and the trashification of the common culture were not enough to make the totalizing church an appealing refuge for many Americans, the transparent fraudulence of U.S. electoral politics completes the priming operation, lending newly militant churches still more legitimacy. Right-wing "movement" churches may lack a credible theology, but at least their adherents can say they have *integrity*—that they belong to their members in a way that the national political parties do not. Although the Republican party wishes that it owned the loyalty of the Christian right rank and file, these voters actually perceive that *both* major parties and most leading politicians have long since sold their souls to big-money interests.

Generating a Politics of Moral Passion

The background factors to which I have attributed the growing strength of right-wing churches tell only half the story: these are all negative "flight" factors driving people toward the churches, but the positive draw of these places is, of course, religious. Their leaders offer "answers," but more important, they supply a vehicle for the mobilization of moral energy.

Ribuffo mentions that 80 percent of Americans tell pollsters they expect to be judged by God, but he says nothing about what this expectation signifies. At a minimum, it signifies a widespread conviction that God rules the world, that evil will be punished and good rewarded, even that God will bring history to an end in a spectacular way: the same polls report that 60 percent of our citizens expect Jesus to return in the role of cosmic judge.

Sociologists say that the fervent religion of the apocalyptic variety appeals most strongly to people whose this-worldly situations are marginal or threatened. They displace their need for vindication and reward as the conviction that God will be their advocate and ultimate vindicator. Politically active right-wing church leaders can offer their flocks the best of both worlds: certain rewards in the life to come *and* a chance to smite Satan and his minions in this life by means of political interventions. Struggles "here below" are linked to a cosmic struggle whose outcome ensures that faithful saints will finally wear crowns of glory.

Not all the people gravitating toward "movement" churches these days experience economic anxieties, but many do. Moreover, as I've indicated, there is an unprecedented degree of cultural desolation at work to give such churches unprecedented power over their adherents. Absent a feisty, spirited, secular campaign to build the New Jerusalem, the churches appear to have the field of moral struggle all to themselves.

At critical times in U.S. history, organized movements for progressive change have been able to connect with the messianic and apocalyptic currents that crackle and seethe in the American psyche. "We can bring to birth a new world from the ashes of the old" certainly carries this raw messianic charge (as, of course, does Julia Ward Howe's original "Battle Hymn of the Republic" on which Ralph Chaplin based his labor anthem). Even the 1960s image of a dawning Age of Aquarius appealed to the wider culture's latent messianism. Today's progressives, on the other hand, are thoroughly dispirited in the literal sense: they have no juice, no passion, no conviction at all that there is a new world waiting to be born.

Ribuffo is quite right to say that religiously based cultural concerns "are not easily trumped in the voting booth by economic concerns." But that's in part because, with very rare exceptions, leaders on the left do not know how to bring the heat of righteous indignation to bear in economic discourse. We have cultural scapegoats aplenty in part because we have been shy about identifying concentrated economic power as the evil oppressor—the very Antichrist, as it were.

As Sean Wilentz rightly points out in the same issue of *Dissent* ("Populism Redux"), the post-

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Keynesian realities of the global economy are not quite as simple as all that. A left that wishes to be taken seriously again will have to bring more nuanced understandings of the new economic situation to the policy debate. Nevertheless, some things must not be nuanced away. There is clearly a dominant or ruling class in this country; this group's control over resources and power is won and maintained at the expense of justice and democratic principle. Although the most vulnerable in society are most directly victimized by the exercise of unrestrained greed, millions of heretofore middle-class Americans are also being set back and injured. A powerful, organized movement for both economic and civil democracy could still redress this glaring power imbalance and greatly improve the life-prospects of current and future generations of ordinary citizens.

There is an essentially religious story line here that progressives must learn to recognize and amplify. The modern civil rights movement succeeded in part because it could locate the struggle for black liberation within familiar biblical typologies. There is certainly no shortage of biblical images and analogues available to describe principal elements of the growing economic-cum-ethical crisis. The left has a far more legitimate claim to these images than the right. What's missing is a contemporary left with a biblical hunger for justice.

Leo Ribuffo Responds

Some of the disagreement between Peter Laarman and me derives from our different perspectives. I wrote about the latest Christian right from the perspective of a historian who—odd as it may seem these days—was trying for a little detachment. Laarman responds from the perspective of a theologically liberal clergyman and social gospel activist. Yet a difference in sensibility also lies at the center of our disagreement. Unlike Laarman, I am not viscerally appalled because many Americans choose to be Protestant fundamentalists or evangelicals. Thus I feel no need to reduce their beliefs to social-psychological symptoms, to ridicule them as members of the "Church of the Galloping Christ (or whatever)," or to join in the comfortable left ritual of being "particularly exercised" by their beliefs.

If Laarman were less exercised, he might do better explaining why during the past three decades millions of evangelicals and fundamentalists have moved from apathy to right-wing activism, and why millions more have shifted from routinely voting for liberal Democrats to routinely voting for conservative Republicans. According to Laarman, these changes are the product of an "unprecedented degree of cultural desolation." Overwhelmed by the "trashiness and weightlessness of popular culture" and lacking "face-to-face conversations" that would provide emotional succor and enlightened dialogue, vulnerable men and women turn to "totalizing" megachurches.

This isn't analysis; it's sociobabble. Much the same thing could have been said about American culture sixty years ago or thirty years ago. In fact, it *was* said—by critics who postulated the mesmerizing power of radio in the 1930s and deplored anomie-afflicted "organization men" in the 1950s. It was metahistorical malarkey then and it is metahistorical malarkey now. Indeed, Laarman inadvertently illustrates my central argument in the Spring edition of *Dissent*, that the left seems unable to understand that religious issues in the public sphere are no less complicated than issues relating to economics, race, or foreign policy.

So let us turn to some plodding if complicated empiricism. Probably the main reason we now face a revival of culturally conservative Protestantism is that the United States, a country whose founders included evangelical heirs to the first Great Awakening as well as Enlightenment deists, has undergone such revivals repeatedly since the 1790s. Not only are these revivals habit forming, but their persistence has established their legitimacy, at least among devout Protestants, and provided a powerful "usable past." Jerry Falwell sees himself as the spiritual successor to Lyman Beecher, and he has a point.

The general religious awakening that has continued off and on since World War II has disproportionately benefited theologically conservative faiths. Decades before the latest Christian right

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emerged in the late-1970s, these religious groups grew primarily because they addressed matters of ultimate concern—the meaning of life, the inevitability of suffering and death, and the possibility of eternal salvation. Liberal and neo-orthodox Protestants were not necessarily oblivious to these matters, as the writings of Reinhold Niebuhr and Martin Luther King, Jr., show, but their customary focus on social issues left many Protestants cold.

By the early 1990s, white self-described evangelicals and fundamentalists made up one-fourth of the electorate (between twenty and twenty-one million voters in the last presidential election). According to plausible estimates, the Christian right component of this religious constituency includes two hundred and fifty thousand avid activists, four million core adherents, and five million sympathizers. More broadly, most evangelicals and fundamentalists have reliably supported conservative Republicans since 1984. They have not been motivated solely by religion-related issues but, along with other Americans who moved right, have also been affected by a feeling of white racial grievance, fear of crime, and the association of political liberalism with Carter-era stagflation at home and humiliation abroad.

Some evangelicals and fundamentalists believe very strange things about contemporary politics (including conspiracy theories first sketched in the 1790s). By and large, however, they do not fit Laarman's caricature. The conservative community of the air waves is no less authentic than that created by Franklin D. Roosevelt's radio speeches during the Great Depression. Rush Limbaugh's fans meet regularly to discuss his opinions, an activity rare if not unknown among viewers of the *MacNeil-Lehrer Newshour*. Most supporters of the Christian right do not belong to megachurches and, judging from membership statistics, those who do so feel adequately served. And they read too. Evangelical and fundamentalist publishing houses produce an enormous supply of books and magazines. Tracts propounding bizarre conspiracy theories are outnumbered by self-help guides, a genre disdained in cosmopolitan circles that nonetheless helps people through their daily lives. Comparably popular books on Bible prophecy offer textual explications as ingenious as those cherished by contemporary literary critics (and probably no less rooted in reality). Even if conceived in social neurosis, as Laarman contends, the Christian right's version of community is far sturdier than any recently created on the left.

Most important, Laarman's sociobabble obscures the obvious proximate sources of the latest Christian right in the cultural shouting match of the Sixties. Insofar as fundamentalists and evangelicals moved right in response to specifically religious or cultural issues, they were reacting against—rather than longing for—a "feisty, spirited secular campaign to build the New Jerusalem." The secularization of public ceremonies, loosening of restrictions on pornography, legalization of abortion, and legitimation of feminism and gay rights really bother them. For cultural conservatives, the problem with Madonna's movies and music isn't that they are less "weighty" than Doris Day's or Deanna Durbin's, but that they are sexier.

As Laarman suggests, the left has nothing to lose and probably something to gain, in morale if not votes, by adopting a less apologetic stance. Even President Clinton would look better if he took the contrarian position that for most Americans the welfare state's benefits far outweigh "bureaucratic" inconvenience. Unfortunately, as Laarman's argument shows, the current cultural shouting match is both the most likely and least advantageous place to find exhibitions of feistiness by the left. Laarman's fervor makes a mockery of what he calls an "organizer's perspective." Who is going to listen further to any organizer who begins by denouncing his or her "lurid religion?" The left's dim prospects will grow even dimmer unless it recognizes—"false consciousness" and "hegemony" to the contrary—that people usually believe what they think they believe. □

Coming Up

Lani Guinier will respond to David Plotke's article on "Racial Politics" (Spring 1995) in our next issue. Meanwhile, she invites *Dissent* readers interested in her arguments to look at her *Harvard Law Review* article "[E]racing Democracy: The Voting Rights Cases" (Vol. 108, No. 1, November 1994).—Eds.

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George Packer

READ 'EM AND WEEP

Economists have begun using the term "winner-take-all economics" to describe the fact that the salaries of investment bankers, software designers, and basketball players continue to rise while the wages of photocopy attendants and paramedics stagnate or fall toward the official poverty level. The phrase suggests that in the present economy millions of people are bound to "lose," and evokes the image of a society badly divided between the successful and the luckless, whose fates have little or nothing to do with one another.

A good place to gauge this state of affairs is Foxwoods, the turquoise and purple casino palace that rises like Oz from a small patch of Indian land in the prosaic hills of southeastern Connecticut. The world's largest, Foxwoods is the great casino of the American middle class. It has none of Vegas's slick glamour or high-rolling dangers; it isn't bleak and malodorous like Atlantic City; it lacks the vacationland lure of the new Mississippi riverboats. Its vast parking lot is jammed with the vehicles of local cafeteria workers, contractors, retirees. Inside, the enormous gaming rooms swarm every night of the year. There are disproportionate numbers of smokers and also, since gambling is a leisure activity that doesn't require legs, people in wheelchairs. Under the purple ceiling half-globes that hide surveillance cameras, winners look nearly as grim-faced as losers. Cocktail waitresses glide by, wearing feathers in their hair and skimpy buckskin costumes that ride high up their hips, but the men seem not to notice. The intensity of gambling leaves no room for an aphrodisiac.

Around the tables a laconic code prevails. It's hard to pick out couples or families or groups of friends, as if, once through the glass doors and past the men in security jackets, those ties dissolve and everyone becomes a separate individual.

Everyone wins and loses alone. The noise never varies and never stops—the clatter of roulette wheels and click of dice and the mechanical spin and clank of slot machines. Gradually you discern human voices too, but they have a scattered, random sound, with no collective focus, directed not at other people but at cards and dice and other inanimate objects.

In the giant slots room, just beyond the sign with an 800 number for Gamblers Anonymous, a thousand machines all seem to be spinning at the same time. The first time I walked into its vast low expanse, with the ceaseless mechanical din, the people standing shoulder to shoulder at rows of machines into which they were feeding quarters by the bucketful, the room gave me a sense of déjà vu. It was like a fantastically lit-up, garish makeover of an old factory floor.

Last year, a hundred miles north in Lowell, Massachusetts, I'd visited an abandoned yarn mill. It stood locked in ice, its shattered windows having looked out on the Merrimack River since the beginning of industrial capitalism in the 1820s. When I toured it the mill had been empty for a decade, and the last owner seemed to have fled before an invading army. In the offices, boxes of time cards and filled-in production tables; in the tubs of dye, junked machinery; on the shop floors, busted crates and stacks of great empty spools. Rows of spinning machines still crowded together on the pine flooring, mechanical rods connecting them to the crank shafts overhead. My guide through these five stories of cold and silent gloom was Donald Marchand, the caretaker, an aging bachelor in a corduroy baseball cap and flannel shirt buttoned over his large belly up to his throat. His father and brothers had worked in the mill; he himself had lived his whole life within a few blocks of it. "Lots of people went up these stairs," Donald

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Marchand muttered as we climbed. "Thousands and thousands."

The slots room at Foxwoods seems a long way from that ghost of deindustrialization. Play, not work, is going on here, and the jobs that exist—croupier, money-changer, waitress—belong to the post-industrial nonunion service economy that has taken the place of manufacturing. But the longer you stay, the more this vision of leisure and freedom comes to resemble compulsion and work. The grandmothers, the old men in hats, the young men and women in sweatsuits pull levers and push buttons as fast and repetitively and with as little expression as textile workers at their looms. When a payoff clatters out, the quarters get scooped up and go right back into the slots. I myself have trouble walking past these machines, with their lurid colors and false promises, without groping in my pocket for coins.

I prefer the poker table to the games of chance. Downstairs, amid the stale smoke, you compete against other fallible human beings instead of long odds. The dealer in his faux-Indian embroidered shirt sweeps away the ante; eight hopefuls scramble for the rest. With each new hand of seven-card stud there is the familiar rhythm of a thrill rising, the thrill that accounts for my being here, the seductive pleasure of self-interested risk and eternally springing hope (for nothing, not even utopia, can take the place of how the nerves jump when I stake money and pride against you and chance, or how the blood warms when I trick you into folding your better hand, or how the vision dims when your last hole card turns out to have completed a flush). With the fourth or fifth card of most hands the thrill ebbs away; but sometimes it begins building to a climax of mute pain or ecstasy.

The last time I played, I lost more money than I'd meant to wager, on two heartbreaking hands. Before I had time to study the faces of my opponents I was cleaned out. My last dollar went for the dealer's tip: as I rose he wished me good night. I walked back upstairs in a daze, past the teepee display and the sound-and-light show of the giant Indian archer, and found myself among the blackjack and roulette tables, where dealers and croupiers kept sweeping piles of chips away from stunned-faced players.

And suddenly I had the only thought that could have consoled me at that moment: All these people are losers. I'm not the only one—they're all losing too. Look at that emaciated woman who just stepped up to the roulette wheel: two minutes, twenty dollars, now she's wandering away, better luck elsewhere. Maybe a few were winning: at every table one or two players warily clutched stacks of chips like dogs with stolen hunks of meat. But the vast majority were losing. If everyone had to exit through a door under the neon sign "Winners" or "Losers," the line at the latter would be five times longer. Then at least they would stop being random individuals down on the night, and could become a community of losers, and look into one another's eyes with a shock of recognition: You too?

The cashier in the food court told me she'd been working at Foxwoods for over a year—a long time, she added, compared to most. I asked if it was a stressful job.

"Well, there's a lot of people. A lot of *angry* people."

In 1993 Americans spent 330 billion dollars on legal gambling—more than on books, movies, amusement arcades, and recorded music put together. Which is to say, Americans are now losing in enormous numbers.

In some parts of the country, gambling is the only growth industry. One cold morning in Detroit a rumor of a casino that would probably never be approved drew ten thousand job applicants. But the explosion in state lotteries, bingo halls, and casinos is mainly due to the inability of governments across the country to raise enough money the traditional way, through taxes, to keep the schools open and pick up the trash. And at first glance gambling seems like a fair way to bring it in. Instead of a compulsory tax on everyone's income, the government runs its lotteries and gets a share of the casino's take. It's voluntary; it's a kind of free market; it even dispenses rough justice in rewarding the blackjack player's skill and punishing the craps addict. Only the willing contribute—no citizen is obliged by law to stand at a video poker machine and pump it full of quarters.

The replacement of taxes by take suggests a new twist in the citizen's relation to the state, one

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strongly aligned with the tendency of contemporary life toward fragmentation, the rule of markets, risk over security. Instead of taxpayers, citizens become players, white-knuckled with self-interest, each trying his or her luck against the others and the house. The winners go on vacation, the losers pay for Medicaid and bridge repairs. Instead of the tax collector, in the old aphorism a leveler second only to death, we have the state as dealer, wearing an implacable mask of indifference to the citizen-players who happen to sit at its table, giving and taking according to the most irrational measure available, blind, mindless, responsible for nothing, just the invisible hand rolling, spinning, dealing.

The state as dealer enshrines self-interest at the level of an official national trait, the way the uniformed extorter represents the state in Haiti and the mild-faced bureaucrat in Sweden. Public revenue becomes the take on millions of separate self-interests colliding in an enormous room, the result determined by modest skill and large amounts of luck—not a bad representation of individual fates, but as a principle of collective destiny it bears some resemblance to the town in Shirley Jackson's story "The Lottery," where every year a citizen whose name has been drawn is stoned to death.

Does it matter how the government collects its money? Taxes, which are so unpopular that politicians would rather gamble with high-risk securities than raise them, are one measure of a citizen's stake in the common life of a democracy. Jury duty almost never happens; military service isn't compulsory; voting is an option more and more people pass up. The requirement that citizens surrender some fraction of their income every year should remind us that private happiness partly depends on public institutions and a web of relations to one another whose center is the government. Taxes measure our willingness to acknowledge that in a sense we're all in it together.

But maybe it isn't true; maybe in the new economy the winners can devote enough of their winnings to insulating themselves from the depredations of the losers that their lives will actually be better off in isolation. The chaos of public schools, the corruption of public officials, the filth of public bathrooms: the word itself suggests poverty and danger and failure. To win is to privatize. A sense of connection is what successful people avoid.

I know the private pleasure of gambling, but I also know that the state as dealer won't solve the problem of Americans' notorious alienation from government; it simply avoids the problem. In the end, take instead of taxes will deepen the alienation, making government more remote from the mass of Americans, more corrupt, less accountable, less just. And it will intensify a recent trend already strong enough to mark a break from our previous history.

Nineteen-eighty-nine was the year that simultaneously gave and took away, offered hope and stifled it. The collapse of communism in Europe rescued present and future millions from a false, coercive idea of brotherhood. We rejoiced to see it reduced to rubble by sledgehammers and overrun by delirious crowds, and then we went back to our Western, free, anxious, and depressed lives.

Nineteen-eighty-nine also began the American recession that officially ended in 1992 and by now appears to be endless. A trend that had been going on almost invisibly for years—and that could be said to have started in the mills of Lowell, Mass.—suddenly became clear. It was harder to find a good job, harder to hang on to it, harder to pay the mortgage and bills without working all the time, harder to see your spouse and children more than half an hour every evening, harder to get very sick without the whole house of cards collapsing. You can find yourself achy and irritable and wonder why you get tired so easily, before finally realizing that you have the flu—have had it for days. And it doesn't go away. Each year the Census Bureau reports that median income is going down, poverty increasing, inequality growing, the mood souring, the bones aching, until you have to ask if the flu ever lasts this long or if it isn't something worse.

It was a strange victory, the year of liberation 1989, the triumph of individual freedom over forced brotherhood and the free market over economic collectivism—victory with a taste of ashes. At the very moment when every other ism collapsed and capitalism was left standing alone in the dust, it trembled, as if it had needed enemies to feel self-confident. We had won, with our crammed supermarkets and growth stocks—enjoy! But it wasn't very enjoyable. The market won the field just when it was ceasing to

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work for more and more people. It had become everyone's taskmaster, a stonefaced dealer of high-only poker in the new winner-take-all economy. It might be resented but it was the only game in town, and still is.

It's not just true in this country. The victory was pyrrhic but global. In Africa, the only road to development goes straight through the World Bank, and former revolutionaries are pleading for tax-free Western investment. In Haiti, the radical priest has been won over to the IMF solution: austerity in exchange for loans. In Europe, social critics are questioning the sustainability of the welfare-state model. And the nations of the world have negotiated a free-trade agreement that, we are told, is our only hope for jobs and prosperity.

The market's victory has been more total than George Gilder or Donald Trump could have dreamed. And yet its shape almost seems un-American. Far from offering the gambler's dream of endless possibility, the contemporary market acts as a treadmill—an ordeal without relief. You don't dare get off and can't slow down, but you're apparently headed nowhere under some vague compulsion from within or without. Instead of personal liberation, it confers unyielding circumstance. Instead of Horatio Alger, we have the downsized middle manager; instead of the Gold Rush, McJobs; instead of Vegas, Foxwoods. This isn't to say that no one is making it the old-fashioned way, only that fewer and fewer people have the idea that it will happen to *them*, as if the house odds have changed.

Alongside the legendary dream of individual freedom and success, a second vision has run through American history, sometimes tempering or offsetting the excesses and cruelties of the first. It falls variously under rubrics like solidarity, this land is your land, neighborliness, and the *"e pluribus unum"* on all the coins and singles exchanged at Foxwoods. It means an ability to imagine the lives of strangers and a willingness to look out for them, a sense of collective destiny, a feeling (to use an out-of-date word) of brotherhood. It has sometimes expressed itself in a desire to secede from the nation's common life and set up a perfect alternative, from the nineteenth-century religious sects and the bohemian communities at the turn of the century to the communes of the sixties. But it also flourishes in the midst of the given, in the trade union and civil rights movements, in the small-town ethos of helping out and the big-government programs of the New Deal and Great Society. It assumes that circumstance and chance play a role in people's lives—that losing doesn't always result from poor personal decision making, and that even poor personal decision making shouldn't always be punished to the full extent of the market's law.

The decay of this vision is the major problem of our time. Upon the market's joyless victory, the contrary idea lost all its power to persuade. This doesn't mean that no one is moved any longer by its appeals—as Orwell wrote in his essay on Dickens, "Nearly everyone, whatever his actual conduct may be, responds emotionally to the idea of human brotherhood"—but that most people find the idea weak, incredible, impossible. *It isn't going to happen.* No one knows how to make it happen, and it's dangerous to try. The best we can expect is small mercies, individual acts of charity—and even some of those, like giving to beggars, have become suspect. As for a larger vision of social reconstruction, it's illegitimate even to talk of it, let alone act.

It may be that human beings *need* an idea of brotherhood—an aspect of our happiness may depend on it. But its endurance, not as a desire but as a possibility, isn't a sure thing. Its recent disappearance has left us frightened, angry, and alone with the taskmaster market. So the facts of today—mutual isolation, the scramble for work, the omnipotence of money—seem like an irremediable condition. Resisting their mental tyranny requires a constant struggle that will end mostly in failure, but a better kind of failure than losing at Foxwoods. □

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Nicolaus Mills

SAVAGE PLEASURES

This spring agents of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals staged the largest raid in the ASPCA's 129-year history. Aided by thirty New York police, a dozen ASPCA agents swooped down on a converted movie theater in the Bronx and broke up an event billed as the "National Championship Cockfight."

The national championship claim may have been hyperbole, but what the ASPCA agents found when they entered the theater was no local cockfight intended for neighborhood aficionados. The raid, which received front-page coverage in the *New York Times,* provided a startling portrait of a secret world in which promoters earn as much as $30,000 a night from admission fees, betting, and liquor sales. The converted Bronx theater where the cockfight was held contained a fighting pit and bleachers designed to be pulled together in case of a raid. Outside there were cameras and lookout guards stationed on roofs. Inside, in an area the size of a football field, was parking space for the 289 spectators who had paid $20 each for admission.

The ASPCA agents found twenty birds already dead from the night's fighting and ninety more locked in cages. The ninety birds, too violent to be turned loose on a farm, all had to be destroyed. Crossbred with pheasants for aggressiveness, given steroids to build their muscles, and injected with angel dust to deaden the pain of fighting, the birds—with values of anywhere between $1,000 and $10,000—were unfit to do anything but kill one another. Neighbors around the Bronx theater said for years it was always possible to tell when a cockfight was held. The morning after there were dozens of dead roosters lying in the street, razor-sharp spurs still attached to their feet.

The ASPCA's March raid was an eerie reminder of the nineteenth-century New York Luc Sante describes in *Low Life*. Sante notes that in 1875, admission to dog fights and cockfights ran as high as $2 but that the real moneymaker was rat baiting, in which a fox terrier was put in a pit of rats and bets were made on how many the terrier could kill in a half hour. So far, rat baiting hasn't made a comeback, but along with cockfighting, dog fighting has.

In the nation's capital it takes place throughout the inner city on a frequent basis. The dogs, pit bulls bred for strength and aggressiveness, are turned loose in fights in which money, drugs, cars, or simply social status are the prize. A dog with a good record in fighting can even be an investment. Pit bull pups now sell for as much as $500.

The savage pleasures are back and in a big way. For martial arts fans, the newest entertainment is a pay-per-view television extravaganza, the Ultimate Fighting Championship. Its rules are minimal. Two men are put in a ring and are allowed to fight until one submits or is rendered unconscious. Anything, except biting and eye-gouging, is allowed. So far nobody has been killed, but the fights, in which contestants wear neither gloves nor protective equipment, are predictably bloody. A fighter can be hit while lying on the canvas, and since there are no rounds or time limits, the accumulated damage from any one fight can be enormous. Losers in a match don't just retire to their corners. They go to the hospital.

To date the gender line has not been crossed in the Ultimate Fighting Championships, but that may not be for long. This year, for the first time in its sixty-eight-year history, women entered New York's Golden Gloves Boxing Tournament, and in the much deadlier sport of kickboxing, women have become featured performers, quickly adapting themselves to the violence of the ring. "I caught her with a looping right hook to the back of her

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head and whoomp, down she went. Her mind said get up, but her legs said for what?" Fredia Gibbs, the women's super lightweight kickboxing champion of the world, told reporters after winning her title before ten thousand fans at the San Jose Arena in California.

"It was a mistake to think them harmless curiosity seekers. They were savage and bitter," Nathanael West writes of the lower-middle class crowd that riots at the end of his Great Depression novella *The Day of the Locust*. West's description of a crowd taking its frustrations out in violence speaks to the traditional notion of savage pleasures as an outlet for the deprived. But in the 1990s the return of the savage pleasures is not simply the reflection of a frustrated underclass caught up in hard times. The savage pleasures are also part of a middle-class culture at home with everything from S&M bulletin boards on the Internet to Rush Limbaugh talking about feminazis.

In video arcades across the country the hottest game is Mortal Kombat, a video that features characters vying for the title of world's championship street fighter. The figures in Mortal Kombat, who look more as if they stepped out of a photograph than a cartoon, don't just hit each other. They throw punches that send animated blood flying, tear out a heart by hand, and in one case rip off an opponent's head and hold it up with the spinal cord dangling from it. The home version of Mortal Kombat is milder, but for suburban kids who have had their taste for violence whetted by viewing the original in arcades, it is still a turn-on. In 1994 six million Mortal Kombat videos were sold, and in stores like Toys "R" Us, the game and others like it have become standard items.

For those interested in the savage pleasures, it is not, however, necessary to come up with the $50 a game like Mortal Kombat can cost. Network television is doing its best to make ersatz combat a regular feature. *American Gladiators*, a syndicated show that features men and women competing weekly in contests ranging from the "Joust" (a battle with pugel sticks on a platform twenty feet above the ground) to "Breakthrough and Conquer" (a combination of football and sumo wrestling) has become a major hit as a result of its ability to persuade viewers that they are getting an updated version of the arena games of old Rome.

Even more significant, talk television, especially in the daytime, has gone from conversation to confrontation. This year a contestant on the *Jenny Jones Show* went home and murdered another contestant who he felt had humiliated him. But what is surprising is that there have not been more such incidents. In contrast to the traditional talk shows of Phil Donahue and Oprah Winfrey, in which guests often reveal aspects of their personal lives that are kinky or painful, on the new confrontational television shows guests are pitted against one another. It is no longer enough to have an unfaithful husband and wife talking to a therapist about what has driven them apart. On confrontation television a Geraldo Rivera, a Sally Jessy Raphael, a Jerry Springer will have an unfaithful husband and wife *plus* their lovers as guests, and the show will revolve around the parties baiting each other. The result will be accusations that stop just short of violence, but violence will always be in the air, and the show's winner is invariably the guest who can put the others in the worst light.

If there is an end in sight for all this violence, it is hard to see. A century ago prize fighting was outlawed in a majority of the forty-four states. Every time a highly publicized bout was announced clergymen rushed to deliver sermons denouncing it. But these days, the only sorts of regulations we seem interested in are those designed to keep welfare mothers and the poor out of sight. The calls for a return to Victorianism that conservatives like Newt Gingrich and the historian Gertrude Himmelfarb have recently voiced promise to leave the savage pleasures intact.

Indeed, if anything dominates the 1990s focus on law and order, it is the brutality it has sanctioned. On the fringes is the vigilantism of a group like Dead Serious, an anti-crime organization in Dallas, Texas, that promises members a $5,000 cash reward if they kill someone while being robbed or attacked. But much more mainstream is the kind of thinking that in the midst of cries for smaller government and lower taxes has made us willing to spend $30 billion a year on prison construction and maintenance. The new Victorians are not prepared to bring back public hanging, but they have been willing to make the law more savage,

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more publicly theatrical, than at any time since the 1950s. This year Alabama will reintroduce the chain gang, Mississippi its infamous striped prison uniforms, and in state after state financially pressed legislatures are coming up with the money needed to pay for executing criminals—$3.2 million per execution in Florida, an estimated $118 million overall in New York.

To make matters worse, since the decade began, even the counterculture has played a role in the rise of the savage pleasures. During the 1960s "Make love, not war!" quickly became the rallying cry of Vietnam War protesters, but these days the counterculture's rallying cry has all too often been a thinly disguised eye for an eye.

In 1994, when a battered Lorena Bobbitt was put on trial for cutting off her husband's penis, she immediately received the support of feminists concerned with the rights of abused women. But at the trial any sense that Lorena Bobbitt's violence had to be seen in perspective vanished. Outside the courthouse her supporters sold buttons that read, "Lorena Bobbitt for Surgeon General," and by the time she was acquitted, she had been transformed by those who sided with her from a desperate woman brutally reacting to a brutal marriage to a triumphant symbol of female rage—a wife who did to her husband what more women ought to do.

It is, however, in pop music that the counterculture has done the most in recent years to legitimize the savage pleasures. Among white rock bands with large followings, Guns N' Roses has long been notorious for its hate lyrics. Its breakthrough hate record, "One in a Million," came out in 1989 and targeted blacks, gays, and immigrants with lyrics that declared:

> Don't need to buy none of your
> gold chains today. . . .
> Immigrants and faggots
> They make no sense to me.
> They come to our country—
> and think they'll do as they please
> Like start some mini-Iran
> or spread some fuckin' disease.

But in the 1990s it is black rappers who have dominated the music charts with records in which hate and violence are equated with getting respect. In the wake of the Los Angeles riots of 1992, the rap music that has gotten the most attention from the mainstream media has been that of rappers like Ice-T, whose song "Cop Killer" includes the chorus:

> COP KILLER, it's better you than me.
> COP KILLER, fuck police brutality!
> COP KILLER, I know your family's grievin'
> (FUCK 'EM)
> COP KILLER, but tonight we get even.

But what has been the most significant about the violence of the black rap music of the 1990s is the degree to which its anger has been turned inward. At the heart of the decade's "gangsta rap" has been a macho that glorifies the gun and the gang.

> Rat-a-tat and a tat like that
> Never hesitate to put a nigga on his back

So advises the popular rapper Dr. Dre in a lyric that all but says that to preserve their "reps" young black men shouldn't hesitate to kill each other. For black women—"hos" and "bitches" in nineties rap—the judgments are even harsher. "She's gone now so it's time to make the switch. So who will be my next gangsta bitch?" the narrator of Apache's "Gangsta Bitch" asks after his gun-toting girlfriend is hauled off to jail. She is one of the lucky ones. At least her boyfriend is willing to let her go. More commonly in gangsta rap it is not enough to use and then walk away from a woman. The great pleasure comes from sexually humiliating her. Typical is 2 Live Crew in "The Fuck Shop":

> Let me fill you with somethin milky and white
> 'Cause I'm gonna slay you rough and painful ...
> I wanna see you bleed!

Or Just Ice with this warning:

> Don't try to get too close
> And try to kiss and hug me
> Start to caress me, then say you love me.
> 'Cause I don't feel shit
> It's only rhythm that I ride
> The only love I got is psychopathic homicide

A generation ago, when the civil rights movement still offered hope, rap music could not have won the popularity it has now. None of the savage pleasures would have appealed so widely in the

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atmosphere of liberalism that was central to American life through the late 1960s. What has made the savage pleasures a force to be reckoned with in the 1990s is not an America on a joy ride but an America in which a common culture built on shared values has been overwhelmed by compassion fatigue.

No one has more thoroughly captured this change —and the brutal aesthetic it makes possible—than film director Quentin Tarantino in his Academy Award-winning *Pulp Fiction*. The film consists of three related stories involving a Los Angeles drug boss and his two hit men, Vincent (John Travolta) and Jules (Samuel L. Jackson). The core of the movie is what happens after the two hit men accidentally murder someone who doublecrossed their boss. The murder takes place in a car, and in order to escape detection, Vincent and Jules take refuge in the house of Vincent's friend Jimmie (played by Tarantino himself).

The scene that follows is driven by the need for Vincent and Jules to get themselves and their car washed before Jimmie's wife returns from work. Jimmie insists she will divorce him if she finds evidence of a dead body in the house. It is an episode that at first seems filled with irony—a brutal murder juxtaposed against the need to achieve the appearance of normalcy. But what follows is a sequence of events in which the murder (we don't see the body) is never a serious matter. What we get instead, as film critic Sarah Kerr pointed out, is the sort of situation comedy television routinely supplies. The crazed disorder that follows the murder is the kind the "I Love Lucy" show specialized in during the 1950s. A show would begin with Lucy doing something silly, like getting her finger stuck in a bowling ball, and the rest of the half hour would revolve around Lucy hiding her predicament from Ricky. In the midst of Lucy's clowning, it never made sense to ask why she was so fearful of Ricky's disapproval, and in the cleaning-up scene from *Pulp Fiction*, we also don't worry about deeper questions. Ruthless as hit men, Vincent and Jules are total flops at cleaning up. They worry that without Lava soap they are not really going to get the blood off their hands, and they bicker over who is going to wipe the blood off their car's windows versus who is going to get the brain matter out of the back seat. Their final humiliation comes when they must take off all their clothes and be hosed down by Jimmie. Standing there naked, they are like children who have gotten themselves so covered with mud that they cannot be allowed in the house to shower. When they get dressed, it is not in the funereal black suits they wore when they did the killing but in swimming trunks and T-shirts Jimmie lends them.

Their transformation is now complete. They have been turned from bad-asses into "dorks," as Jimmie puts it. At this point it is impossible to imagine Vincent and Jules as brutal hit men, just as it is finally impossible to feel upset about the murder, rape, and drug dealing that underlie virtually every scene in *Pulp Fiction*. In contrast to the comedy of an Evelyn Waugh or Joseph Heller novel, that of Tarantino isn't designed to bring us up short just as we are enjoying ourselves. The film's savage pleasures supply not only the violence we see, but the laughter used to undermine any moral revulsion we might feel about it.

It is a strategy that has made Tarantino the most talked-about film director in Hollywood, and yet he has done nothing that the public is not prepared to do on its own. We need only ask how the O.J. Simpson murder trial has become the leading news event, sports event, and entertainment event of the decade. It is not the pathos of the trial—the death of a young mother and an aspiring actor—that moves us. Nor is it the search for truth. Most people seem to have made up their minds about Simpson's guilt or innocence already. What draws us to O.J.'s trial is the savage pleasure of watching a rich and powerful man fight to stay out of prison, coupled with the corresponding sense that whatever he has done is so particular to his life that it does not threaten us personally. We are free to remain voyeurs, hidden from sight, shielded from pity and terror. □

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Debra Satz

FEMINIST ACADEMIC JOURNALS

What does it mean to be a feminist scholar today? To get a sense of the shape of contemporary feminist research, I looked at the last three years of *Signs: A Journal of Women in Culture and Society, Feminist Studies, Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy,* and *differences*. I was especially interested in examining which topics were centrally featured, the methods of analysis and argument that the authors employed, and the usefulness of those methods for our understanding of gender inequity. The best writing in these journals underscores both the intellectual power and the diversity of feminism today. Still, some of this research seems to carry troubling practical and theoretical implications. In addition, as a philosopher concerned with issues of economic justice, I am disappointed that only a small number of articles address the "political economy" of sexism: questions of the distribution of work, income, and wealth.

These four journals share a concern with the nature of women's "difference" from men and its meaning. They are divided, however, both by the methodological approaches they take to this issue and by their areas of specialization. Broadly speaking, *Signs* ranges over the widest domain, featuring work from history, sociology, psychology, philosophy, and literature, while the authors contributing to *Hypatia* take an explicitly "philosophical" approach to their topics. *differences* typically presents authors trained in literary and psychoanalytic theory; in *Feminist Studies*, historical and literary studies predominate. This division of intellectual labor is, of course, not absolute; some articles inevitably spill over the boundaries of disciplinary domains.

In each of these journals, feminist scholars discuss the way that gender bias functions to shape academic disciplines. In fact, it is not difficult to show that the historical exclusion of women from the social and natural sciences has affected both the content and direction of research. For example, sexist assumptions about women have led theorists to ignore the inequalities produced by the family, to exclude unpaid domestic labor from Gross National Product calculations, and to undervalue the role of emotion in judgment.

There are, however, tensions between the methodologies of the various feminist critics of traditional research. Theorists in these journals differ in their answers to centrally important questions: in criticizing scientific inquiries, are we to accept the fundamental commitments of empirical science itself? Or must we radically break from our core conceptions of reason, impersonal evidence, and argument?

In order to understand some of the tensions in and among these journals, a little background is helpful. There are feminist philosophers, such as Helen Longino, who embrace a modest empiricism. They believe that experience ultimately provides the basis of all our knowledge about the world. They also endorse the possibility of reasoned reflection on our understandings and values. But they insist that this reflection occurs in a social context: for example, they try to show how gender relations among social and natural scientists can shape their theoretical inquiries. While these empricists, therefore, do not deny that values influence the direction of scientific research or that scientific theories are underdetermined by evidence, they hold nevertheless that there are common standards of empirical adequacy against which competing theories can be judged. Femi-

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nist models of science, they claim, are often more compatible with evidence and reason than are the standard theories; they argue that assumptions and evidence that are applicable to one sex only should not be generalized to everyone.

Feminist empiricism has been subjected to criticism on many fronts. While some of the authors in *Hypatia* embrace it, others make claims about a feminine way of knowing, not available to men. Philosophers such as Sandra Harding seek to establish a feminine "standpoint" where women are privileged as knowers and researchers. The core idea of standpoint theory has had many expressions, ranging from the claim that women see things differently than men because they are more nurturing and intuitive than men, to more limited proposals that women have some gender-specific knowledge—for example, unlike men, they can know what it is like to be pregnant.

Standpoint theorists, while embracing women's "difference," are not necessarily hostile to empiricism. But the idea that knowledge is gendered has led some feminists to attack reason and language as male prerogatives and even to claim (for example) that the Aristotelian syllogism is a form of sexist thinking. Many feminist theorists, such as Carol Gilligan, claim that women think differently than men do.

But what is the evidence for such a global claim? Not all women are feminists, let alone in similar social and economic positions. And surely some of the characteristics attributed to women—that they are caring, nurturing, and relational—can reflect the oppression of women and their subordination within the family as much as a female essence. More important, the a priori rejection of "male" reason may displace more subtle accounts of the ways in which sexist assumptions, the exclusion of women as researchers, and the differential treatment of men and women as objects of study distort our knowledge. How can feminists argue that gender *causally* influences science and understanding except with appeals to empirical example and our common norms for what constitutes a good argument?

Another problem with this approach is that it simply inverts the sexist paradigm, by making a "standpoint" available only to women into a norm for the entire species. But if the goal of feminism is to realize the fundamental equality of all human beings, what is the value of replacing one gender-specific model with another? (This should not be taken to imply that the goal of equality is opposed to difference; the challenge for egalitarians is to understand how and when differences are to be taken into account.) Is a world in which economic and social inequality is held constant, but women are now at the top, a fundamentally *better* world? In a world populated with Margaret Thatchers as well as Margaret Sangers, would we really want to be, as Katha Pollitt put it in a 1992 *Nation* essay evoking the downside of feminist essentialism, "marooned on Gilligan's island"?

Some theorists reject both empiricism and the standpoint approach to knowledge. While the term is somewhat misleading, these theorists might be called "postmodernists." They reject the idea that reality can be grasped independently of its linguistic representation, pointing instead to the complex ways that power is intertwined with language. While *Hypatia* predominantly features articles by writers who are either sympathetic to the core ideas of reason and argument or who attempt to expand those ideas by appeal to other core concepts, the majority of the writers in *differences* are, I think, postmodernists. These writers implicitly practice a "linguistic turn": believing that language both structures and constitutes our experience, their research centers around the analysis of concepts and categories. I will discuss below some articles in which linguistic analysis sheds new light on social problems and alters the field of theoretical investigations. But I found many of the articles in *differences* less successful and illuminating for three reasons.

First, the idea that language structures or constitutes our experience can be interpreted and applied in different ways. Consider the claims of one *differences* author, Charles Bernheimer: "My talk in this essay about behavior of the male sexual organ may appear to be essentializing and reductive because of its anatomical specificity. But my point... is that the body, whether male or female, is as undecidable and shifting as any semiotic construction." ("Penile Reference in Phallic Theory," *differences*, Spring 1992) This analogy between the body and language is significant, because one of the central tenets of postmodernism involves

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the denial of the radical separation of materiality and language, of representation and that which is represented.

There is something right about this thesis. Language, let us agree, can either blind us or open us to ways of seeing. Claims about "women" or "gender" can ignore important divisions among women (such as those based on class and race) or the ways in which these very concepts are shaped by inequality. Words have the power of "worldmaking": they help to determine what we experience. But there is also something absurd about this thesis, if it is taken to imply that all experience is literally linguistic. Words are not the only things that matter, and matter is not made up of words: you cannot achieve gender equality by declaring it is here. You cannot feed the hungry by declaring that they are fed, or even by pointing out that "hunger" and "poverty" have cultural and social dimensions. And you cannot erase biological difference between male and female bodies by arguing that they are both semiotic constructions. To my mind, too many of the articles in *differences* dissolve the material world into the "materiality" of language.

Second, although the idea that language reflects social power does not necessarily entail that there can be no such thing as a better argument, some of the articles I read initiated more global attacks on human reason. There is something paradoxical about these attacks. Postmodern theory has successfully challenged so many of the a priori assumptions of traditional scholarship; how can its advocates now rule out the possibility of common standards on a priori grounds? It is an entirely open question which of our shared concepts and categories reflect objectionable structures of power and which can be rationally justified. Even if we abandon the idea that all knowledge is neutral and absolute, we are still left with the important problem of distinguishing knowledge from opinion.

Third, many of the articles are insular and unreadable: I spent considerable time thumbing the Oxford English Dictionary. Nor did I find the terminology necessary for the ideas the authors were trying to convey (when I understood them). There is another strange irony here: jargon and irrelevant formalism are endemic to the discipline most often viewed as the diametrical opposite of postmodern theory: modern economics. Economists, too, almost always bury their substantive assumptions beneath a technical apparatus (in their case, mathematics) that only a specialist can understand. This mathematical modeling generally requires a level of abstraction that removes the discussion from any serious connection with the phenomena being studied. Could it be that postmodernists are trying to imitate the language of these "scientists" and possibly share in their prestige? Given all the ways that scholars might enlighten us about our world, it is regrettable that both postmodernists and economists have cloaked their investigations in jargon.

Not every article in *differences* fits this model. Some of the writers seem self-consciously aware of the pitfalls of the postmodern methodology. For example, a recent issue of *differences* contains an essay by Neil Lazarus that criticizes postmodernism for its potential political nihilism. Arguing along similar lines, an article in *Signs* by Jane Martin warns of replacing a "false unity" with a "false difference" in which feminists affirm the existence of nothing but difference.

Some of the writing in *differences* is also imaginative and informative. In "Gender Encoding in Fluid Mechanics: Masculine Channels and Feminist Flows," N. Katherine Hayles argues that gender stereotypes shaped scientists' understanding of hydraulics and fluid flow; in a special issue devoted to postmodernism and feminist political theory, Lisa Bower usefully explores the implications of judicial decisions about pregnancy for achieving gender equality; and Christine Sylvester gathers interviews from women involved in Zimbabwean cooperatives, and frames hypotheses about urban and rural women's participation.

Postmodern insights can sometimes generate important results. Two recent articles—one in *Feminist Studies* and one in *Signs*—are exemplary in this regard. They show how feminist theory can usefully employ linguistic analysis, and they should be read by anyone interested in current policy debates about welfare. An article in the Summer 1993 issue of *Feminist Studies* by Nancy Rose examines the role of gender and race in the development of work programs from the 1930s to the present. Rose looks at the way that women were

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marginalized within the New Deal work programs: their participation was restricted to a maximum of one-sixth of the positions, when eligible they were considered only for "women's work," and they received lower payments on the work programs than men. She argues that programs designed primarily for white men—such as Social Security and unemployment compensation—were usually not means tested and provided payments that were replacements of a portion of wages. These programs explicitly excluded agricultural laborers, domestic service workers, and government employees. In contrast, programs that more directly served poor women required that they continually demonstrate their eligibility as well as their moral worth. In the period following 1945, recipients of Aid to Dependent Children (later Aid to Families with Dependent Children) were removed from the rolls if there was a "man in the house." Such restrictive relief requirements did not generally affect those programs in which white men were the predominant beneficiaries.

One of the most striking facts Rose uncovers is that the "welfare to work" programs of the 1960s and 1970s treated men and women in an asymmetric manner. Those work programs that were voluntary and that relied on economic incentives disproportionately served men; programs became more mandatory and punitive when the recipients of benefits were women. Rose thus demonstrates that "workfare" has not meant the same thing for the men and women involved.

In an article with similar relevance to present policy issues, Nancy Fraser and Linda Gordon in the Winter 1994 issue of *Signs* trace the meanings of "dependency," a concept that occupies a central place in contemporary criticisms of welfare. How, they ask, "did the receipt of public assistance become associated with dependency and why are the connotations of that word in this context so negative?" This article looks not only at the way that words can shape experience, but also at the way words can be resisted, how they can function as a "site" of social conflict. In the complex analysis that Fraser and Gordon present, words are not the only determinants of experience.

Their argument goes roughly as follows. Welfare "dependency" stigmatizes poor women by making their poverty appear to be the result of their moral and psychological problems. The term has multiple and contradictory meanings that, when brought into the open, will lead us to reject the language of dependency as the appropriate language for viewing welfare and welfare reform. In particular, they point to a shift in meaning from dependency as an economic, legal, or political relation of inequality, to dependency as a sign of individual weakness. The shift is associated with the narrowing of the term's application, from a preindustrial usage where it covered both men and women, to an industrial usage applied to women alone, to a postindustrial usage where it attaches chiefly to women of color.

Fraser and Gordon, like Rose, trace the two tracks of public provision initiated during the New Deal to earlier hidden usages of dependency. One track provided entitlements such as unemployment and old age insurance. Although these were universal programs, the exclusion of domestic service workers, the understanding of men's labor in terms of a family wage, and simple racism combined to keep women and minorities off the rolls. The other track created programs such as Aid to Dependent Children, funded by general tax revenues, means tested and often morals tested as well. Both tracks are forms of public provision, yet only the latter is seen as creating dependency and as giving recipients something for nothing.

Yet, as the authors point out, the sharp distinction between welfare and entitlements cannot be maintained. Each makes people dependent in some senses, and interdependent and independent in others. Old age insurance, for example, changes the relationship between children and their parents; by making it easier for children to abandon their parents in old age homes, it may actually render the aged more dependent. Nor can welfare be declared a handout while Social Security is seen as just compensation for a life of hard work. When people claim that welfare mothers ought to work in order to be independent, they are assuming that childrearing is not work. In recent years, many welfare rights organizations have directly challenged this claim.

In the context of a worsening economy and eroding job opportunities, the authors' emphasis on the need for a cultural reevaluation of welfare is both timely and provocative. In showing us just how the concept of "dependency" is constructed out of particularly sexist assumptions, the authors

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are giving us reasons *now* to reject it or rethink it. This is feminist theorizing at its best: a cross-disciplinary and original investigation with practical import for the lives of poor women.

These four feminist journals vary in method and subject matter. As is always the case, some individual pieces are more fruitful and imaginative than others. However, it does seem to me that they share a common core—a concern with the cultural, social, and historical dimensions of the inferior social status of women. That said, there is surprisingly little about the economic aspects of gender inequality—the essays I have just described are notable exceptions. Economics, of course, has not been a discipline hospitable to feminist concerns. But it seems to me that no inquiry into the condition of women in modern society can be satisfactory if it fails to confront the discriminatory employment structure and the ways that work is categorized and rewarded. More important, we need analyses that focus both empirically and theoretically on the relationship between income inequality and other aspects of gender inequality, for example, inequalities in health, mortality rates, division of labor within the household, and education. So I will close this review with a single stunning fact that I hope will inspire reflection, research—and activism: black women in the United States between the ages of thirty-five and fifty-four have a mortality rate almost three times as high as that for white men and women. This differential is only partly accounted for by income disparities. What makes up the other part? □

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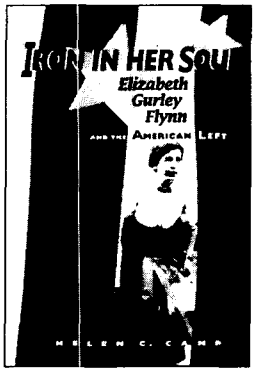

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George Scialabba

"A WHOLE WORLD OF HEROES": CHRISTOPHER LASCH ON DEMOCRACY

THE REVOLT OF THE ELITES AND THE BETRAYAL OF DEMOCRACY, by Christopher Lasch. Norton, 1995. 276 pp., $22.00.

"The history of modern society, from one point of view," Christopher Lasch observed in *Haven in a Heartless World*, "is the assertion of social control over activities once left to individuals and their families." This, at any rate, is the point of view from which Lasch constructed his ambitious and provocative critique of American society. From another point of view, of course, modernity is identified with, even defined by, the rise of individualism: economic, political, and ethical. The latter perspective is the once and probably still dominant ideology of progress: of history as the story of freedom, as a narrative of individual emancipation from the trammels of communal prescription and superstition.

Whether these two points of view are antagonistic or complementary is not clear, to me at least. It may be that individual freedom and social control have, in different areas or aspects of experience, simply grown up side by side; or that they are intimately and paradoxically (that is to say, dialectically) related. Typically the left has endorsed and the right opposed individualism in the progressive or Enlightenment sense, which denotes the lessened authority of traditional beliefs and practices. But what are the political implications of nontraditionalist antimodernism—Lasch's brand?

Lasch himself offered little help in answering that question; he was notoriously, exasperatingly wary of programmatic statement and ideological self-definition. He did, for what it's worth, affirm in response to critics (albeit fifteen years before his death):

> Once and for all: I have no wish to return to the past, even if I thought a return to the past was possible. The solution to our social problems lies in a completion of the democratic movement inaugurated in the eighteenth century, not in a retreat to a pre-democratic way of life. Socialism, notwithstanding the horrors committed in its name, still represents the legitimate heir of liberal democracy. Marxism and psychoanalysis still offer the best guides to an understanding of modern society and to political action designed to make it more democratic.

In his last decade, Lasch's alarm and disgust deepened, his tone soured, and his allegiance to socialism faltered. But although his complaints about contemporary society sometimes sounded like the neoconservatives', their origin and import was radically different. To see why—to reconstruct Lasch's intricate and wide-ranging cultural critique and connect it with the neopopulism of *The Revolt of the Elites*—will require a lengthy detour through the labyrinth of psychoanalytic theory.

According to Freud, a newborn infant cannot distinguish between itself and the rest of the world, and therefore between the source of its needs (its own body) and the source of its gratifications (other people, especially its mother). Hence its first mental experience is a sense of omnipotence. Inevitably, some of its needs go unmet, at which time it becomes aware, more or less traumatically, of its separation from the rest of the world. It reacts with rage against the source of its frustration (its parents), but since the source of its frustration is also the source of its gratification and the sole guarantee of its continued existence, the infant cannot tolerate its own impulses of rage and aggression, which

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would, if realized, annihilate it along with its parents.

The infant's response to this dilemma is fateful—indeed, virtually defines the human condition. The infant represses its rage. But repressed emotions always return. The infant's rage is converted into a variety of fantasies: the fantasy of primal union, in which the irreversibility of separation and dependence is denied; the idealization of the parents, which denies that the parents sometimes frustrate the child and also that it wishes to punish them in return; and the splitting of parental images into all-good and all-bad, which denies the incomprehensible discovery that gratification and frustration come from the same source.

These fantasies have one crucial thing in common: they are all outsized, out of scale. The infant is pictured as either omnipotent or helplessly persecuted, the parents as either perfectly benevolent or implacably threatening. And the fundamental truth of the infant's situation—its separation from and dependence on the rest of the world—arouses alternating panic and denial.

According to psychoanalytic theory, the repression of infantile rage and the fantasies that result are universal and unavoidable. It is what happens thereafter that determines the degree of the child's—and adult's—maturity or pathology. What must occur, if emotional health is to be achieved, is a gradual scaling down of the superhuman size that the parents have assumed in the infant's fantasies, and a gradual softening and displacement ("sublimation") of the intense, overwhelming feelings they have called forth. How?

In Lasch's account, there are several ways. First, there is the child's continual experience of love and discipline from the same source, that is, its parents. The actual experience of discipline—of limited but not token punishment—slowly breaks down the archaic fantasy that the parents' displeasure means the infant's annihilation. Next, there is what Lasch called "optimal frustrations." In sharp contrast to the awkward and excessive solicitude of the contemporary over-anxious mother, the instinctive confidence of a woman immersed in a kin community or "biological stream" allows the child to experience simultaneously the lessening of its mother's attentions and its own modest, growing mastery of its immediate environment. Then there is the child's encounter with what Lasch (following the British psychoanalyst D.W. Winnicott) called "transitional objects": playthings, games, and other objects and activities that symbolically express unconscious attachments but at the same time provide the child with reliable links to a stable, comprehensible external world. And finally, there is everyday contact with the father, whom infants of both sexes formerly envied, hated, and feared because of his superior access to the nurturing mother. When the child is part of the father's work environment, it observes two things: first, that he is fallible; and second, that he possesses important and satisfying skills, which he is able and willing to pass on to the child, thus earning its gratitude. Both insights help reduce him to human size in the child's psyche.

To the extent that these several experiences occur, the child can overcome its terror at the discovery of its separateness from the world as well as its unconscious fear and hatred of those who forced this discovery upon it. It can abandon its chief defense against those feelings: the fantasy of overcoming separateness and regaining primal, undifferentiated union with the world. In other words, it can become a self, distinct from others and comfortable with the distinction. It can grow up.

But if these maturational experiences do not occur, no secure self emerges. The growing child's unconscious mental life is still haunted by boundless rage over infantile helplessness, by the fear of parental retaliation that this rage induces, by the simultaneous idealization and demonization of the parents, and by the infant's only available defense against these impulses and fears: the fantasy of a return to oneness and omnipotence. The result is a neurotic adult. Neurotic, Lasch asserted, in specific and predictable ways: wary of intimate, permanent relationships, which entail dependence and thus may trigger infantile rage; beset by feelings of inner emptiness and unease, and therefore ravenous for admiration and emotional and sexual conquest; preoccupied with personal "growth" and the consumption of novel sensations; prone to alternating self-images of grandiosity and abjection; liable to feel toward everyone in authority the same combination of rage and terror that the infant feels

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for those it depends on; unable to identify emotionally with past and future generations and therefore unable to accept the prospect of aging, decay, and death. This constellation of symptoms is known within psychoanalytic theory as narcissism: the lack of an autonomous, well-defined self. It is currently, as Lasch claimed and the clinical literature attests, the most common form of emotional pathology—the neurotic personality of our time.

It was not always so. The neurotic personality of Freud's time was quite different—acquisitive, fanatically industrious, self-righteous, sexually repressed. Then the typical symptom was obsessional (an inexplicable compulsion, for example, incessant handwashing) or hysterical (chronic excitability or, conversely, non-somatic paralysis of a limb or faculty, for example, frigidity). These symptoms stood out in sharp relief against the background of a stable personality, something like a "bug" in an otherwise well-functioning computer program. To simplify for the sake of contrast: the Victorian/Viennese neurosis was localized and discrete; contemporary narcissism is systemic and diffuse. To simplify even more dramatically: the character of selfhood has changed, from a strong (often rigid) self, in secure possession of fundamental values but riddled (often crippled) with specific anxieties, to a weak, beleaguered self, often full of charms and wiles, and capable, but only fitfully, of flights of idealism and imagination.

Why? What can account for this subtle but immensely significant shift? Lasch formulated an answer in *Haven in a Heartless World* (1977), *The Culture of Narcissism* (1978), and *The Minimal Self* (1984). He posited a connection between two of the deepest, broadest phenomena of modern history: the change in personality described above and the change from early, developing capitalism (relatively small-scale, still permeated with preindustrial values and work practices, and largely concerned with expanding production to satisfy basic needs) to mature capitalism (dominated by huge, bureaucratic organizations, "rationalized" by the reduction of workers' initiative, autonomy, and skills, and concerned with expanding consumption through the creation of new needs). Modernization, according to Lasch, is the introduction of new, parallel forms of domination into work life and family life. In a sweeping but closely argued passage he makes the central link in his complex argument:

> The socialization of reproduction completed the process begun by the socialization of production itself—that is, by industrialization. Having expropriated the worker's tools and concentrated production in the factory, industrialists in the opening decades of the twentieth century proceeded to expropriate the worker's technical knowledge. By means of "scientific management," they broke down production into its component parts, assigned a specific function on the assembly line to each worker, and kept to themselves the knowledge of the productive process as a whole. In order to administer this knowledge, they created a vastly enlarged managerial apparatus, an army of engineers, technicians, personnel managers, and industrial psychologists drawn from the same pool of technical experts that simultaneously staffed the "helping professions." Knowledge became an industry in its own right, while the worker, deprived of the craft knowledge by which he had retained practical control of production even after the introduction of the factory system, sank into passive dependence. Eventually, industry organized management itself along industrial lines, splitting up the production of knowledge into routinized operations carried on by semiskilled clerical labor: secretaries, typists, computer card punchers, and other lackeys. The socialization of production—under the control of private industry—proletarianized the labor force in the same way that the socialization of reproduction proletarianized parenthood, by making parents unable to provide for their own needs without the supervision of trained experts.

How does industrialization produce a culture of narcissism? Lasch argued that the evolution of capitalism has affected family structure and the socialization of children in a number of ways. In reorganizing the production process, it has removed the father from the child's everyday experience and deprived him of the skills that formerly evoked the child's emulation and gratitude. This means that the child's archaic, punitive fantasies about the father persist unchecked. In encouraging geographic mobility, it has uprooted families from kin communities and replaced intergenerationally transmitted folk wisdom about child rearing with social-scientific expertise dispensed by professionals. This undermines parental confidence and replaces face-to-face authority over the child with the impersonal, bureaucratic authority

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of schools, courts, social welfare agencies, and psychiatrists. In promoting mass consumption, advertisers (like social-science professionals) have convinced parents that their children are entitled to the best of everything but that, without expert assistance, parents are helpless to determine what that might be. In generating a mass culture glutted with rapidly obsolescing commodities and transient images, it blurs the distinction between reality and illusion and renders the world of objects unstable and bewildering. This makes it difficult for the child to locate "transitional objects," which would help it find its way from infantile attachments into the external world of culture and work. And in promising an endless supply of technological marvels, it evokes grandiose fantasies of absolute self-sufficiency and unlimited mastery of the environment, even while the quasi-magical force that conjures up those marvels—that is, science—becomes ever more remote from the comprehension or control of ordinary citizens. This is a recipe for regression to psychic infancy: fantasies of omnipotence alternating with terrified helplessness.

One of the prime tenets of psychoanalysis is that pathology and normality are not sharply demarcated but continuous. So these secular developments —the sundering of love and discipline in the child's experience, the invasion of family life and work life by professional and corporate elites, the blurring of distinctions by mass culture—not only produce more narcissistic individuals than formerly, but also create a new psychic environment. A world populated by rigid selves is a world of sublimation and its derivatives: aggression, greed, cruelty, hypocrisy, unquestioning adherence to inherited values and restraints. A world of weak selves is more fluid, corruptible, blandly manipulative, sexually easygoing, uncomfortable with anger and rivalry, and leery of defining constraints, whether in the form of traditional values or of future commitments. The distinction between the early capitalist self and the late capitalist self is, roughly, the distinction between the Puritan and the swinger, the entrepreneur and the corporate gamesman, the imperial self and the minimal self, Prometheus and Narcissus. That these distinctions bespeak profound change is obvious; that they represent progress, less so.

For Lasch, then, modernization was not the solution but a new form of the problem—the problem, that is, of domination. This belief was the source of his longstanding quarrel with his fellow socialists and feminists. Much, perhaps most, of the left has always been convinced that industrialization, technological development, and the erosion of traditional forms of authority are intrinsically progressive. Modernization has had its costs, admittedly, but the answer to the problems of modernity was usually held to be more of the same, preferably under democratic auspices. In socialism's glorious youth, Marx called for "a ruthless criticism of everything existing"; few of his successors doubted that the decline of Christianity, patriarchy, possessive individualism, and everything else existing would be followed by something better. But, Lasch argued, these things have by and large declined; the result is not a radical extension of political and sexual autonomy but a bureaucratically mediated war of all against all.

Lasch's most intimate and intense disagreements were with cultural radicals: critics of education, sports, religion, sexuality, the family, and the work ethic, and proponents of a new, "liberated" ideal of expressiveness and self-realization. What these radicals ignore, Lasch charged, is that Christianity, competitive individualism, and the patriarchal family are already obsolescent, at least in those social strata where modernization is most advanced. These values and institutions have been undermined not by leftist opposition but by capitalists themselves, for their own purposes: to promote mass consumption and to regiment the work process. By espousing an ideal of personal liberation largely confined to leisure time and heavily dependent on the consumption of goods and services, cultural radicals have conceded defeat. Instead of adapting to industrialization and mass culture, Lasch contended, the left should oppose them. Only a change to human scale, to local, decentralized control in workplaces, communities, and families, can halt the spread of commodity relations and the bureaucratization of the self.

But what, if anything, can motivate so drastic a reversal of the direction of modern history? *The True and Only Heaven* (1991), Lasch's *chef d'oeuvre*, addressed this question. In that book, Lasch opposed the philosophy of "progress" to the

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tradition of "virtue," a universalistic moral psychology to a particularistic one, the "ethos of abundance" to the "ethos of the producer." Progressive ideology, he argued, rests on a misunderstanding of history and human nature. According to progressivism, capitalist development created an increasingly educated, militant, unified working class, whose challenge to wage labor and private ownership of the economy became more and more radical. The Russian Revolution derailed this socialist dynamic, which is currently in historical limbo. But whatever radical opposition to capitalism there's been has come from industrial workers, together with a few professionals and intellectuals, and has been oriented to the future—to the fulfillment of capitalism's stunted potential by new, noncapitalist institutions.

Wrong, Lasch countered. The working class and its socialist or social democratic leaders have fought hard, but never over fundamentals. The only challenge to capitalism per se—to wage labor, the factory system, and the concentration of credit—came from movements of independent small producers threatened with extinction: farmers, craftsmen, shopkeepers, and others usually disparaged by socialists as politically naive or reactionary "populists." Socialist struggles were about wages and working hours. Only the "reactionary" populists, rooted in a vanishing way of life, raised questions about self-management, the effect of work on the worker, or the control of investment.

Much recent historical scholarship supports this claim of Lasch's, along with another: that the political philosophy of the American Revolution was not Lockean liberalism or "possessive individualism," that is, an ideological precursor of liberal capitalism, but an older, "republican" philosophy of civic virtue. The revolution was less about property rights than about citizenship. And once again, it was small producers and proprietors who were the main bearers of this ideology and the source of the most effective and radical opposition.

These historical reinterpretations led on toward a deeper moral and psychological revisionism. The ideology of progress assumes that maturation involves moving away from narrow and particular affections toward abstract and universal ones. Family, ethnic, regional, and religious loyalties are something we're supposed to grow out of, or at least subsume in a wider sympathy. When such loyalties are exclusive, we call them "chauvinistic" or "fanatical"; and we usually assume that the more intense one of these particularistic commitments is, the more likely it is to be dangerously exclusive.

For Lasch, this devaluation of the local and traditional was a radical error. It is not enlightenment but memory, not breadth of sympathy but intensity of identification, that makes for inner strength. What does it mean, he asked, that the democratic movement of the eighteenth century and the anticapitalist movement of the nineteenth, like the civil rights movement of the 1960s, were wrought not by the "universal class" of socialist theory, not by enlightened rationalists liberated from local attachments and beliefs, but by people very much committed to such attachments and beliefs, people loyal to "archaic" creeds, crafts, and communities under attack from the forces of "progress"? Not, that is, by people looking toward the future, but by people looking toward the past?

It means, he answered, that "the victory of the Enlightenment," with its unwillingness to accept limits on human aspiration and its promise that in a rational society the traditional virtues would be obsolete, "has almost eradicated the capacity for ardor, devotion, and joyous action." On moral even more than environmental grounds, "the basic premise of progressive thought —the assumption that economic abundance comes before everything else, which leads unavoidably to an acceptance of centralized production and administration as the only way to achieve it—needs to be rejected."

> Popular initiative ... has been declining for some time—in part because the democratization of consumption is an insufficiently demanding ideal, which fails to call up the moral energy necessary to sustain popular movements in the face of adversity. The history of popular movements ... shows that only an arduous, even a tragic understanding of life can justify the sacrifices imposed on those who seek to challenge the status quo.

This "tragic understanding of life," emphasizing a sense of limits, natural piety, self-discipline, self-reliance, and self-sacrifice, Lasch found in the Greek and Roman classics; in the Judaeo-Christian prophetic tradition; in early modern Protes-

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tant theology; in the thought of Carlyle, Emerson, Brownson, William James, Sorel, Reinhold Niebuhr, and others; in eighteenth-century republicanism, nineteenth-century populism, and the Southern black culture from which Martin Luther King, Jr. emerged. It is the ethos of the artisan, the small proprietor, the yeoman farmer; of civic virtue, civic equality, and a broad diffusion of wealth, culture, and competence. This is the "moral economy"—the character, worldview, and social relations—that mass production and political centralization have decisively undermined.

To this imposing edifice of argument, *The Revolt of the Elites* adds numerous elegant flourishes, though no new structural features. Lasch's death last year at sixty-one was, in the obvious sense, sadly premature; in another sense, this posthumous collection nicely rounds off his oeuvre. Forcefully written, erudite, and topical, it achieves a public voice; and those who have followed Lasch's long and complex intellectual development will be glad of a few more clues to what, in the end, his thought comes to politically.

The title essay and its companion, "Opportunity in the Promised Land," are a critique of two pillars of progressive ideology: meritocracy and social mobility. Though frequently considered essential features of a democratic society, they are best understood, Lasch argues, as an efficient method of elite recruitment and legitimation. Meritocratic elites, he points out, are in some ways even less publicly accountable than hereditary ones. The latter usually had local roots and loyalties, and their caste ideology emphasized civic responsibilities and noblesse oblige. Even more important, their superiority was obviously, savingly arbitrary. They were therefore far less prone to the pernicious delusion—which Lasch, drawing on the work of Robert Reich and Mickey Kaus, shows is alarmingly prevalent among the new managerial/cognitive elites—that they deserved their relative immunity from social ills.

A high degree of upward mobility is in fact quite compatible with sharp social stratification. Nor does it have much historical connection with democracy in the United States. That anyone with enough energy, talent, cunning, and ambition could become president, or become rich, or otherwise escape the common lot is not at all what most eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Americans meant by democracy. What "defined a democratic society, as Americans saw it, [was] not the chance to rise in the social scale so much as the complete absence of a scale that clearly distinguished commoners from gentlemen." The egalitarianism that so profoundly impressed generations of European visitors derived "not merely from the distribution of wealth or economic opportunity but, above all, from the distribution of intelligence and competence."

> Citizenship appeared to have given even the humbler members of society access to the knowledge and cultivation elsewhere reserved for the privileged classes. Opportunity, as many Americans understood it, was a matter more of intellectual than of material enrichment. It was their restless curiosity, their skeptical and iconoclastic turn of mind, their resourcefulness and self-reliance, their capacity for invention and improvisation that most dramatically seemed to differentiate the laboring classes in America from their European counterparts.

Readers who are not professional historians may wonder whether this is an idealized portrait, though enough evidence is included in *The True and Only Heaven* and *The Revolt of the Elites* to place the burden of proof on those who would reject it. If it is even approximately accurate, it argues powerfully for Lasch's contention that we can aim at maximum economic efficiency (conventionally defined) or robust democracy, but not both.

Lasch's dissatisfaction with present-day political culture is intense and comprehensive. It extends to the supplanting of neighborhoods by networks and "lifestyle enclaves"; of public parks, cafes, taverns, general stores, community centers, and other informal gathering places that "promote general conversation across class lines" by shopping malls, health clubs, and fast-food chains; of schooling based on patriotic myths and stories of heroic virtue by a sanitized, ideologically innocuous curriculum "so bland that it puts children to sleep instead of awakening feelings of awe and wonder"; of the torchlight parades and oratorical eloquence, the impassioned debates before vast audiences, the scrappy, partisan newspapers and high voter turnout associated with nineteenth-century politics by the apathy and gullibility of the contemporary electorate and the intellectual and

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moral poverty of contemporary political speech. Of course, lots of people complain about such things. But without a plausible account of their origins, this sort of complaint merely exasperates and demoralizes. It is just because Lasch convincingly connects these phenomena with the rationalizing imperatives of the market and the state that, even though the latter seem all but irresistible, his criticism energizes.

Lots of people talk about "virtue," too. The preaching of virtue to the poor and beleaguered by such court philosophers as William Bennett, Gertrude Himmelfarb, and George Will has unfortunately done much to discredit the word among friends of equality. Lasch's conception strikes a better balance than theirs between self-denial and self-assertion. It includes an emphatic lack of deference toward wealth, office, and professional credentials; contempt for luxury and greed; a strong preference for economic independence and for face-to-face relations in business and government; a sense of place; a lively curiosity about science, art, and philosophy; and perhaps most of all, a passion for vigorous debate and splendid rhetoric. A lot more, in short, than diligence and chastity, which seems to be mainly what the neoconservatives have in mind. Lasch's notion of virtue is strenuous and classical; his ideal of a democratic society is, in a magnificent phrase of Carlyle's that he quoted often, "a whole world of heroes."

A whole world of heroes—this ideal has at least two radical implications. The first is that democracy requires a rough equality of condition. Dignity and virtue cannot survive indefinitely amid extremes of wealth and poverty; only someone with a paltry conception of virtue could believe otherwise. The second is that the democratic character can only flourish in a society constructed to human scale. Just as modern war has made military valor more or less superfluous, a world dominated by large corporations and bureaucracies offers little scope for the exercise of civic virtue; nor even, in the long run, for psychic autonomy and integrity—that is, for selfhood, as we currently understand it.

It may be that these and other prerequisites of full, rather than merely formal, democracy cannot be reestablished. The "assertion of social control" that Lasch identified as the thrust of modern history may not be reversible. Lasch himself acknowledged that although contemporary populists "call for small-scale production and political decentralization ... they do not explain how these objectives can be achieved in a modern economy" or how "the virtues associated with proprietorship can be preserved, in some other form, under economic conditions that make proprietorship untenable." Perhaps they cannot be.

If not, then new forms of virtue, heroism, democracy, and selfhood may arise. At any rate, the terms will surely persist; what they will signify

dissent

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may differ considerably, rendering their present meanings archaic. The gains—in comfort, information, mobility, tolerance, aversion to cruelty, capacity for irony, and other important respects—may conceivably outweigh the loss in psychological intensity, stability, integrity, and depth. Lasch did not think so, and the rest of us would do well to take the measure of his doubts. □

Stefan Collini

CULTURAL FANTASIES

THE DEMORALIZATION OF SOCIETY: FROM VICTORIAN VIRTUES TO MODERN VALUES, by Gertrude Himmelfarb. Knopf, 1995. 314 pp. $24.00.

"It ain't that hard to understand," Newt Gingrich said recently, referring to the idea of using "shame" to stamp out undesirable behavior. "Read Himmelfarb's book. It isn't that complicated." Certainly, Gingrich's summary of *The Demoralization of Society* could not, as reported, be called "complicated." His remarks indicate one level of response to the book, but they are premised on the assumption that Himmelfarb's topical argument is backed by the authority of historical scholarship. It is worth considering how far that assumption is justified.

This is Gertrude Himmelfarb's tenth book. As a historian, she has largely concentrated on the intellectual and social history of Victorian Britain; her earlier books dealt with the thought of such leading figures as Acton, Darwin, and Mill, while her more recent work has tended to focus on the analysis and treatment of poverty. Most of her historical writing has also been intended, implicitly or (increasingly) explicitly, to address issues in contemporary American society. Thus, for example, her controversial interpretation of John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and Liberalism: The Case of John Stuart Mill,* published in 1974, contained a long concluding section in which she argued that the inadequacies of Mill's conception of liberty were most manifest in, and had perhaps contributed to, the glorification of individual self-expression, and especially sexual expression, in the present. Though largely devoted to an exegesis of Mill's writings, the book's animating purpose was in fact a restatement of the case for convention, tradition, and inherited order.

In recent years, she has become an increasingly prominent polemicist on behalf of right-wing causes. Several portions of her new book have already appeared in periodical form over the past seven years, their provenance constituting a roll call of influential conservative journals: the *American Scholar, Commentary, Forbes Magazine,* the *Public Interest,* the *Wall Street Journal.* And personally, too, she is at the heart of the neoconservative establishment: Irving Kristol, long-time editor of the *Public Interest,* is her husband, and William Kristol, leading Republican strategist, is her son. Though specialist scholars have expressed strong reservations about her historical work, her public standing is considerable: in 1991 she was selected by the National Endowment for the Humanities, then chaired by Lynne Cheney, to give the prestigious Jefferson Lecture, one of the highest honors available to a scholar in the humanities.

In his essay on Coleridge, John Stuart Mill declared that "an enlightened Radical or Liberal" ought "to rejoice over such a Conservative," since the serious statement of contrary views was rare and valuable. Does Himmelfarb's new book suggest that something similar might be said of her? Here, after all, is a senior, widely published scholar seeking to bring some of her extensive knowledge of the past to bear on problems of contemporary culture and society. In principle, even for those who may suspect they will not agree with her conclusions, this might be an exemplary performance in the role of Historian as Public Intellectual.

The Demoralization of Society contains seven chapters on aspects of Victorian society, concentrating largely on questions of poverty and charity and of sexuality and domestic life. The Prologue, "From Virtues to Values," asserts the claim that the firmly held Victorian sense of the propriety of "the virtues" has given way to the modern relativistic sense of the variability of "values." A substantial Epilogue, "A De-Moralized Society," sets out her case for the devastating effect this change has had upon modern America and, less centrally, Britain, especially as indicated by statistics about illegitimacy and crime.

The historical chapters are cast in a form that makes them easily accessible to the non-expert

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reader. Their fairly extensive footnotes might suggest that they also aspire to be taken as contributions to scholarship, though it is hard to imagine most professional historians of nineteenth-century Britain finding anything here that they would regard as both new and true. From time to time these chapters try to induce a mildly revisionist *frisson*, in, for example, suggesting that urban conditions in Victorian England were not as bad as one might think or that many women were very happy with their "separate sphere," and so on, but neither the definition of the topics nor the level of treatment really seem to reflect the contributions of recent scholarship. Reading these chapters, one has an uneasy feeling that the agenda that has led these topics to be selected for this treatment is being determined offstage (if being determined in Washington, for such it surely is, can ever be described as "offstage").

The purpose of this longish historical detour is only made fully explicit in the Epilogue. Contemporary society is, we are told, in a desperate state, and only a return to something like the moral certainties of the Victorians can save it. The evidence presented to support the claim that we face this desperate and, in the strict sense, historically unique plight is, by any standards, slight. It essentially consists of two series of statistics for the United States and Britain: figures for certain reported crimes and figures for "illegitimacy," which she calls, in a characteristic phrase, "those two powerful indexes of social pathology." Nobody, I should think, could be untroubled by the incidence of crime, especially violent crime, in the contemporary United States, though the matter of the alleged rate of increase over the past century or more is bedeviled by questions of definition, under-reporting, and so on. Long-term variations in crime statistics often tell us as much about variations in changing sensitivity to certain forms of behavior and effectiveness in policing them as they do about any objective increase in the incidence of that behavior. Still, one does not have to accept Himmelfarb's end-is-nigh-ism to feel that there is something to worry about here.

But quite why "illegitimacy" is supposed to be such a powerful indicator of "social pathology" is less clear. (At another point she brackets divorce rates with crime rates, though it is hard to see them as belonging to the same category; it is anyway surely arguable that the greater availability of divorce has tended to increase rather than diminish human happiness, an argument that not even the most counter-suggestible social thinker has been tempted to make for crime.) The most plausible case has to be that the presence of two parents makes it less likely that children will grow up delinquent. Indeed Himmelfarb asserts, a trifle ambitiously as well as imprecisely, that it has been "conclusively demonstrated" that "the single-parent family is the most important factor associated with the 'pathology of poverty'" (the imprecision lies in the phrase "factor associated with," which establishes nothing about the nature of the connection). But, even supposing there were such "conclusive" evidence for this claim, the figures for "illegitimacy" in contemporary society would not actually isolate the key element. For example, a recent British survey has revealed that 77 percent of a sample of cohabiting women who had registered an "illegitimate" birth five years earlier were still cohabiting; conversely, over two-thirds of "single parent families" are the result not of "illegitimacy" but of marital breakdown. In other words, rates of non-nuptial childbearing are of limited value in telling us about the number of adults involved in child-rearing. But this only underlines what some of her other remarks suggest anyway: that one reason why Himmelfarb sticks to the sociologically unrewarding category of "illegitimacy" is because she is really exercised about all that "illicit" sex. And this, of course, is where the moral example of the Victorians is supposed to help.

Quite *how* it helps is not so clear, and at this point some interesting issues about the role of history in social criticism begin to make themselves felt. Himmelfarb disclaims any intention of urging us to "emulate" Victorian society: there can be no going back to a "different stage of economic, technological, social, political, and cultural development." But history is still "instructive": "The main thing the Victorians can teach us is the importance of values—or, as they would have said, 'virtues'— in our public as well as private lives. And not so much the specifically Victorian vir-

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tues that we may well value today, as the importance of an ethos that does not denigrate or so thoroughly relativize values as to make them ineffectual and meaningless." As it turns out, history can "remind us of a time, not so long ago, when all societies, liberal as well as conservative, affirmed values different from our own. (One need not go back to the Victorian age; several decades will suffice.)"

More than one claim is in play here. In particular, there is some unsteadiness between asserting that history acquaints us with societies that held values different from our own (which is, surely, true and beyond dispute), and asserting that all earlier periods held firmly to their values, but that ours, uniquely, does not (which is highly disputable and, surely, false). It is some version of this latter claim that Himmelfarb returns to most frequently. Seen in historical perspective, "it appears that the present, not the past, is the anomaly, the aberration." So, for example, "the kind of family that has been regarded for centuries as natural and normal" is now seen, apparently, as "pathological"; equally, the "sexual revolution" of the 1960s was indeed, in Himmelfarb's view, "revolutionary," and so on.

What history teaches us, therefore, is that from, roughly, the appearance of *homo erectus* down to, roughly, 1962 all societies believed firmly in "morality," but since then the whole thing has gone to hell. This is a bizarre position for a historian, of all people, to uphold, but it is made all the odder when juxtaposed to another of Himmelfarb's repeated claims about the present: "Today's moralists" have a "fanatical glint in their eye"; in fact it turns out that we are surrounded by so-called "New Victorians" who "zealously monitor" a "code of behavior" that is "at once more permissive and more repressive than the old." These are the upholders of "moral correctness."

But, wait, wasn't it supposed to be distinctive of the present age that we didn't really hold *any* moral values seriously? Although she more than once *says* that that is what is distinctive of the present, the real charge, as the above passages (which are actually far more numerous) indicate, is that people hold the *wrong* values: "casual sexual intercourse is condoned, while a flirtatious remark may be grounds for legal action." And who are the "people" who hold this wrongheaded mix of moral convictions? Again, we find a kind of unsteadiness: these misguided moralists are described as constituting the "dominant" or "reigning" culture in the contemporary United States, though they are also accused of disdaining "the mundane values of everyday life as experienced by ordinary people."

We have long been familiar with the concept of "left paranoia," but at present we are surely seeing a recurring pattern of "right paranoia": it is former Vice President Dan Quayle's "cultural elite" who are once again the target here, and it is their views that are alleged to dominate government and what Himmelfarb calls "the educational establishment," although they are out of step with the beliefs of "ordinary people." It is a backhanded tribute to the importance that conservatives like Himmelfarb attach to the influence of liberal intellectuals and academics that in the United States of 1995 she can still believe that the urgent task is to prosecute this kind of *Kulturkampf*. "The counterculture of yesteryear" (that is, the poor old sixties again) is now the "dominant culture," and "one of the most effective weapons in the arsenal of the 'counter-counterculture' is history."

How should we characterize this attempt to enlist "history" in the service of doctrinaire moralism and bare-faced Beltway opportunism? One question to ask is whether those who are trying to understand, and those who are trying to govern, the United States at the end of the twentieth century will find any especially relevant lesson in pondering on Victorian Britain more than on any other society (including, for example, nineteenth-century America). Suppose Himmelfarb had happened to be a scholar specializing in eighteenth-century France or seventeenth-century Holland, or Tang China or Imperial Rome: would she then have been able to write as though her scholarly work bore directly on current concerns? Although she occasionally writes as though historical perspective *per se* were all that mattered, it soon becomes clear that it is certain features characteristic of Victorian Britain, as opposed to any other historical time and place, that are supposed to be vitally relevant to the United States now. And this gives the clue to why this slight and oddly constituted book should be published with such accompany-

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ing hype, and hence a clue to assessing her performance as public intellectual more generally.

Victorian Britain was the first society to attempt to come to terms with the social consequences of industrialism. Probably the single greatest cultural force predetermining the nature of that response was the legacy of Protestant Christianity, especially in the form of the "Evangelical revival" of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. And, speaking in the most schematic terms, the form taken by that response, in public debate and policy alike, was a combination of individualism and moralism. In fact, even to speak of "combination" understates the extent to which, as historians have been recently coming to recognize, the individualism was always and already moralized, just as the moralism was fundamentally and pervasively individualistic. Questions of social and economic policy tended to be discussed in terms which accorded priority to individual character and duty operating in an environment that was largely taken as given or otherwise beyond analysis.

One, equally schematic, way to characterize the political thought and policy-making of the century between, roughly, 1880 and 1980 might be to say that they exhibited a sustained, if uneven and often inconsistent, attempt to remedy the inadequacies of this individualistic approach. This involved, above all, identifying the structural elements in the determination of individual fates, and using the power of the community as a whole to prevent or redress some of the most inefficient or unjust consequences of these structural forces. The beginnings of this response are evident in the Victorian period itself, and although Himmelfarb's picture of the age involves no mention of these developments, those in search of the contemporary "relevance" of Victorian England might reflect that it was in this period that we find the beginnings of legal protection of trade union activity, collective provision of essential services, regulation of working hours and conditions, publicly funded schools, libraries, and museums, death duties on inherited wealth, taxes on higher incomes, and so on. In the course of the twentieth century an extensive network of such measures was constructed as the analysis of the structural forces at work deepened.

These measures were, of course, developed in response to particular circumstances, and as some of those circumstances changed—with, for instance, the decline of the traditional manufacturing industries and the transformation of the old urban working class—there was inevitably a reaction against some of these measures and the ideas they were based on. But in Britain and, especially, the United States, something else has become intertwined with that social or economic reaction in ways that have fueled it, given it a wider appeal, and turned it spiteful, namely a cultural reaction against a series of changes symbolized, or demonized, as "the sixties." And this conjunction of reactions has enlisted the support of those who feel, strongly but indistinctly, that "things have gone too far." Some of those who now denounce "welfare" believe that they could have sympathized with their parents' enthusiasm for New Deal welfare policies because those policies did not disturb what now, as part of an anxious, nostalgic reaction to the speed and scope of social and cultural change, get represented as the sexual, domestic, racial, and aesthetic verities. This produces a yearning for an Edenic state before the corrosive forces of collectivism and the counterculture did their deadly work.

For good historical reasons, Victorian Britain can more easily be made to look like a plausible embodiment of this happy condition than most other times and places, and Himmelfarb's book is designed to exploit this availability for maximum ideological effect. Moreover, the Victorian period is just near enough, and can seem familiar enough, to allow the projection onto it of psychological longings and cultural fantasies that are actually expressive of the strains of social change and generational conflict in the present. This was made embarrassingly clear in the course of the "return to Victorian values" episode as it played itself out in British politics and culture in the mid-1980s, an episode that seems about to be re-staged under American conditions (Himmelfarb begins her book with Margaret Thatcher's invocation of "Victorian values" in the election campaign of 1983). British historians were pretty unanimous in finding only the most tenuous or superficial links between the world conjured up by Tory politicians and the realities of Victorian society. The "Victorian values" celebrated by Thatcher looked much more like an idealized version of the norms of the

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English lower-middle class between the wars.

Thatcher's elaboration of this picture came in the course of an interview, and so needed to be judged by the criteria appropriate to that genre. But Gertrude Himmelfarb is self-consciously aspiring to the role of scholar-as-intellectual, where different standards apply. Speaking generally, what distinguishes the most successful practitioners of this role—those whom it is worth reading even when one does not agree with them, perhaps especially when one does not agree with them—is the ability to suggest that, though any single piece of writing may be occasional, accessible, and brief, it embodies some of the fruits of a genuine attempt to pursue a line of inquiry to its limits. A particular essay or book by such a figure may be passionate and partisan, and all the better for that. But the cultural authority comes in part from the reader's sense that the scholar-as-intellectual is drawing on thought and research that, on another occasion or in another idiom, have taken inquiry as far as, for the moment, it can go. By contrast, one's sense with this book, as with some other examples of Himmelfarb's work, is that the ulterior polemical purpose imposed itself at too early a stage in the process and short-circuited any deeper, more sustained probing of the complexities of the issues.

This is one reason why, one is forced to conclude, she is not a modern version of that kind of intelligent conservative opponent Mill urged radicals to be grateful for. But she also falls short of that role because her allergy to the present is too strong to allow her to give a discriminating account of it. So, this irritable dismissal of so much of contemporary culture, this desperate wish that the sixties had never happened and that one could return to the apparent certainties of the era of one's own early adulthood, is the negation of any genuinely historical response to contemporary issues. A mind that comes to rest so easily, and in such a predictable place, has little to offer to anyone not already disposed to welcome the same nostalgic simplicities. So, this book does not, alas, provide a heartening or edifying example of the historian as public intellectual: it is too full of resentment, tendentiousness, and closed-mindedness for that. It might more accurately be titled "Portrait of the Historian as an Old Grump." □

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Richard Wolin

NOAM ON THE RANGE

WORLD ORDERS, OLD AND NEW, by Noam Chomsky. Columbia University Press, 1994. 311 pp. $24.95.

Toward the third hour of the hagiographic documentary about Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent*, a moment of truth emerges. Chomsky is lecturing at the University of Wyoming. He has just finished his familiar stump speech: fifty reasons why we live in a totalitarian society. Striving to revive the old thesis about American society as a form of "soft totalitarianism," Chomsky argues that in the totalitarian societies of old, the state routinely used force to keep the public in line. In so-called democratic societies, he says, gentler techniques must be used to preserve order—thereby implying that though the means differ, the end results are more or less the same. During the ensuing question session an agitated undergraduate type steps to the microphone and has this to say:

> For the last hour and forty-one minutes you've been whining about the elite and how the government has been using thought control to keep people like yourself out of the public limelight. Now I don't see any CIA men waiting to drag you off. You were in the paper; that's where everyone here heard you were coming from, and I'm sure they're going to publish your comments in the paper. In a lot of countries you would have been shot for what you've done today. So what are you whining about? We are allowing you to speak. I don't see any thought control.

In response, Chomsky says something about its not being a question of individuals: "It has to do with marginalizing the public and ensuring that they don't get in the way of elites who are supposed to run things without interference." But his cover has been blown. The real difference between a genuine totalitarian society and our own—despite its manifest injustices and inequities—has suddenly been laid bare. In a real totalitarian society, someone like Chomsky would not be allowed to speak, let alone publish books (at an astronomical rate, one might add) that are widely discussed and reviewed. Why then does it take a twenty-year-old college student from Laramie, Wyoming, to point out the obvious?

What Chomsky seeks to show in *World Orders, Old and New* is that talk of a "new world order" is so much deceitful verbiage. Instead of a newfound international harmony, what we have now that communism has been expelled from the world stage is an unfettered opportunity for rapacious first world nations to exploit less fortunate inhabitants in other parts of the world. He begins with a review of U.S. foreign policy during the cold war, which he defines as a mechanism of "population control": a pretext for creating a security state that was as much concerned with domestic repression as with expanding U.S. influence abroad. Along the way Chomsky serves up a number of timeworn left-wing platitudes. Readers of his earlier books will be readily familiar with the arguments. They are not wrong, but the picture they paint is extremely partial.

In Chomsky's view the first and last word on world orders, old and new, was set forth by Winston Churchill following World War II: "The government of the world must be entrusted to satisfied nations, who wished nothing more for themselves than what they had. If the world-government were in the hands of hungry nations, there would always be danger. . . . Our power placed us above the rest. We were like rich men dwelling at peace within their habitations." Churchill's words become the book's leitmotif. As Chomsky glosses them: "To rule is the right and duty of rich men dwelling in deserved peace." World order, past and present, boils down to a type of "codified international piracy."

At several points in *World Orders* Chomsky describes contemporary American society as totalitarian in a nonmetaphorical sense. His only hesitancy concerns whether the United States is "totalitarian" or "fascist." Often enough, he inclines toward the latter characterization. Journalistic support for the Gulf War amounted to an "exultant display of fascist values." The hidden agenda of the recent Middle East peace agreement permits "the United States and Israel [to move] towards more rational forms of imperial control [of the Occupied Territories]," such as those used by "the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe [and] Nazi Germany in occupied France." Concerning the chorus of media approval that greeted the Clinton administration's 1993 raid on Baghdad (in retaliation for Iraq's alleged plans to assassinate Presi-

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dent Bush on a 1992 visit to Kuwait), Chomsky remarks: "The rulers of any totalitarian state would be impressed." Selected quotations, however, fail to do justice to the Orwellian vision of American political life on almost every page of this heavy-handed, fact-filled, citation-laden jeremiad.

It is fairly easy to identify what is amiss with Chomsky's views. Much less easy is the intricate task of sorting out what may be of value in Chomsky's hyperbolic saga of American totalitarianism at home and abroad. To paraphrase Delmore Schwartz: "Just because I am paranoid doesn't mean there aren't people who are really out to get me."

What is wrong with Chomsky's account is that it is too seamless, too monolithic. State Department strategists would, I'm sure, be extremely gratified if American "total world domination" functioned in reality as smoothly as Chomsky claims. For Chomsky's unilateralist model proceeds according to the assumption that U.S. policymakers themselves are free of competing factions or interests; that, likewise, U.S. allies always stand in agreement with American goals and intentions; that foreign policy is wholly insulated from popular domestic pressures and influences; and that the wishes and actions of the third world nations we are trying to rule present no obstacle to the realization of our aims.

At times, however, Chomsky tries to have it both ways. Thus, in a previous book, *Manufacturing Consent*, written with Edward Herman, he admits that tensions and divisions among ruling elites indeed exist. In the end, though, he concludes that such differences of opinion do not really matter—they are merely pseudo-differences. According to his "propaganda model" of opinion formation, dissent always takes place within well-defined limits. Any views that threaten to overstep these boundaries automatically fail to register. Upon closer inspection, these superficial differences of opinion are actually more insidious, argues Chomsky, inasmuch as they perpetuate the delusory image of a free society.

Chomsky is far from wrong in emphasizing the structural limits to opinion formation in an era in which corporate-owned mass media play such a disproportionate role in shaping public perceptions. The problem with the "propaganda model," however, is that it is only capable of providing a series of self-fulfilling prophecies. Since, according to this model, all differences of opinion are a priori "pseudo-differences," "authentic differences" by definition fail to register. One might ask Chomsky if, when, circa 1968, Walter Cronkite wondered aloud on the *CBS Evening News* what the hell we were doing in Vietnam—this was merely another instance of "pseudo-difference"? If so, what would a genuinely dissident opinion look like? In the end one gets the feeling that it is Chomsky himself who needs this monolithic image of opinion formation for the sake of confirming his own status as a maligned and misunderstood radical intellectual.

Let me try to expose some of the shortfalls of Chomsky's reasoning by way of an anecdote. I'll call it the "Andy fallacy." In the early 1980s I had a radical-activist friend from Berkeley named Andy. Andy loved to tell stories of how close we had come in the waning days of the Nixon administration to either a coup d'état, nuclear war, or (preferably) both. In the months preceding Reagan's reelection in 1984, Andy chose a different hobby horse to ride. He was convinced that as soon as Reagan was reelected, American troops would pour into Nicaragua to overthrow the Sandinistas.

Now I'll concede the point that if Reagan had been allowed to act in accordance with his preferences U.S. troops would have intervened. But the interesting thing is that this did not happen. And the reason for this is simple. In the aftermath of the Vietnam War a cultural consensus had developed about acceptable thresholds of American military intervention abroad—a consensus that considerably raised the domestic political stakes of any such move. As we now know, Reagan and his accomplices were instead forced to resort to a series of embarrassing illegalities—Iran-contra—which, when unmasked in 1986, paralyzed his ability to govern and permanently tarnished the image of his administration. In earlier works Chomsky has acknowledged the importance of an oppositional political consensus in deterring heightened levels of U. S. intervention in Central America (see, for example, *Turning the Tide*). But in *World Orders* such balanced insights are virtually nonexistent.

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Chomsky views any expression of U.S. foreign-policy altruism—that is, claims to the effect that we are interested in promoting democracy and human rights in addition to the creation of "markets"—as so much ideological pap. In his view, our international policies and interventions are purely interest-driven, and the interests are of the basest sort. But the realities of global politics are more complex than he will allow. On this complicated terrain motives and interests are far from one-dimensional. They are economic, strategic, and—though Chomsky would be loath to admit it—at times ethical. Contra Chomsky, McDonald's and General Motors do not control the State Department—or at least not yet. Our interest in seeing democracy prosper in Eastern Europe, South Africa, and in South America is neither purely economic nor purely strategic—though only a naif would deny that such motives play a large role. There is also a moral-ideal component that derives from our own democratic traditions, according to which the principles of national self-determination and freedom count.

In a world where economic, military, and geopolitical competition is rife, questions of principle, unfortunately, rarely come first. But that is not to say à la Chomsky that they are nonexistent. At one or more levels they inevitably underlie foreign policy considerations. In ways that are often imperceptible, they set implicit limits to what we as a nation consider acceptable. Even the case of the Gulf War—the new world order litmus test, which, in Chomsky's eyes, we flunked spectacularly—involved a tissue of motivations and goals that are far from easy to sort out. Undeniably, national self-interest was prominent. But also at stake were solidarity with traditional allies (Israel as well as moderate Arab regimes), as well as the need to stand up to a regional tyrant. In fact, one of the main problems of Chomsky's approach is that it seems incapable of even acknowledging the concept of justifiable or legitimate strategic interests. Only if he were to acknowledge this concept would his criticisms of U.S. foreign policy take on a less monolithic cast and begin to make sense. For only then could one begin to distinguish between naked self-interest and a more principled and fair-minded orientation toward world affairs. As it is, Chomsky's leftism implicitly sanctions a neo-isolationism that, at the moment (and far from coincidentally), is also quite popular with the far right. Despite the failures of U.S. foreign policy past and present, the concept of moral leadership in the sphere of world politics remains a valuable aspiration.

Admittedly, postwar American foreign policy in Latin and Central America, Southeast Asia, and Iran (where in 1953 the United States helped to overthrow the Mossadegh regime in favor of the shah) has been a series of disasters predicated upon an imperious conception of national self-interest. This politics of cynicism and exploitation reached new heights with the Reagan administration's immoral (and, as it turned out, erroneous) distinction between totalitarian regimes, said to be unreformable from within, and authoritarian dictatorships, with whom one could safely climb into bed without losing one's virtue. At issue are policies that wreaked untold misery on innocent third world peoples, policies that were motivated by an exaggerated fear of communism and a puritanical self-righteousness. In the words of the historian Louis Hartz, these actions were spurred by an ideology of "Americanism," which hypocritically proceeded to negate at will the rights to national self-determination of peoples around the globe. The final bill for such policies and practices, moreover, has yet to be paid in full.

This is the story that Chomsky tries to tell, but it has been told before and better by others. His critical flaw is to present a portrait of U.S. power at home and abroad so monolithic and impregnable that despair or inaction become the only possible responses. He thereby abets the process of depoliticization and left-wing marginalization he seeks to contest.

The last chapter of *World Orders* consists of a lengthy indictment of the recent Palestinian-Israeli peace accords. The accords were far from perfect, and there remains a long and difficult path ahead. But they should be acknowledged for what they were: a precarious yet historic first step. For the first time, the two protagonists are officially on speaking terms, and a negotiated settlement to the dispute, rather than a new Arab-Israeli war, is a tenuous possibility.

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Chomsky, however, relentlessly indicts the opportunism of Arafat and the PLO for having signed the accords. He views the entire peace process as little more than a plot to preserve U.S.-Israeli political hegemony in the region. To be sure, the agreement came at a time when the PLO's popularity among Palestinians had waned considerably. With Hamas, a new uncompromising militancy has emerged on the scene, causing Israel to finally treat the PLO as a desirable partner in peace. In an imperfect international political scene, the Middle East is one of the least perfect regions. But at a time when one would do well to fan the precarious embers of hope, Chomsky heaps nothing but bile on those who seek compromise.

To psychologize Chomsky's long-standing contempt for Israel as a stereotypical instance of Jewish self-hatred would be simplistic. But even before his ignominious involvement in the Faurisson affair (for the relevant details, see Anson Rabinbach's article, "Memories of Assassins, Assassins of Memory," *Dissent*, Spring 1994), his views on Middle Eastern affairs had become suspect. In truth, Chomsky is grinding an all-too-familiar axe. The PLO, we are told, has displayed a willingness for peace for some time. There is nothing "mutual" about the conflict; instead, Israel alone, a proxy of U.S. imperialism, is at fault.

Almost lost amid Chomsky's rhetorical excesses in *World Orders, Old and New* is a timely (yet all too brief) discussion of economic "internationalization"—the 1980s buzz word for the growing world dominance of transnational corporations (TNCs), as supported by U.S.-dominated financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Along with the nations of G-7 and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, these corporations and organizations play an increasing role in determining the state of the world economy as well as the distribution of wealth among rich and poor nations. Yet, because they are multinational, they are less and less subject to controls. The conditions for debt repayment they have imposed on third world nations in South America and Africa have been notoriously draconian. Often, their harsh stipulations threaten to destabilize democratically elected regimes.

In Chomsky's words, the TNCs are "totalitarian in internal structure, quite unaccountable, absolutist in character, and immense in power." They herald the birth of a new world economic situation in which capital has become ruthless and, unlike labor, highly mobile. Unlike the corporations of old, today's TNCs are devoid of regional loyalties or a sense of an ethical obligation to their employees. According to one report, at present they control as much as one-third of the world's private-sector productive assets. As a result, in recent years corporate profits have risen dramatically while wages measured in real terms continue to sink. The current world economic order has practically nothing to do with free enterprise. Instead, it may more accurately be described as the type of "corporate mercantilism" whereby

> governance is increasingly in the hands of huge private institutions and their representatives. The institutions are totalitarian in character: in a corporation, power flows from top down, with the outside public

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excluded....National governments, which in varying ways involve some measure of public participation, are constrained by such external factors to serve the interests of the rich and powerful even more than in the past.

But even such promising analyses risk becoming muddled. For one cannot claim at the same time that both U.S. interests (which are eminently national) and those of the TNCs (whose boundaries tanscend the nation-state) predominate, when, in crucial respects, they operate at cross-purposes. Here, too, Chomsky's ideological obsessions stand in the way of the type of nuanced and responsible social analysis that is so desperately needed by the left today. □

Bogdan Denitch

HORROR AND RESPONSIBILITY

SLAUGHTERHOUSE: BOSNIA AND THE FAILURE OF THE WEST, by David Rieff. Simon and Schuster, 1995. 225 pp. $21.50.

This is a courageous and painfully honest book that must have been very hard to write. Although it is very well written, it will earn David Rieff few friends. It is extraordinarily difficult to write serious reportage about Bosnia-Herzegovina while the carnage continues. Being analytical opens you to the charge of depraved indifference. If you report that victimization does not make people nobler and that hunger, deprivation, and constant fear of death make them appear "self-centered," you are taken to be unsympathetic to their pain. If you argue that the demand to "lift the unjust arms embargo against the victims" must necessarily be accompanied by a call for military intervention by NATO or the United States, you are accused of dragging your feet. And when you denounce the arrogant "angels" of the UN who have stood by and witnessed the slow-motion genocide of Bosnia's Muslims over the past three years, limiting themselves to feeding the survivors and the future victims, you are accused of being overwrought.

The brutal facts are these:

(1) Military intervention, at least by air, must accompany the lifting of the arms embargo, since someone must *deliver* the arms, and this can be done only if the Serbian anti-aircraft fire is silenced and the Bosnians are protected from the Serbian offensive that would inevitably follow any prospect of massive aid.

This argument is unpopular both with the Bosnian government and the pro-Bosnian activists in the West. But without that logistical support, the call to lift the arms embargo is cruel demagoguery played for domestic political reasons: by the Republican right to embarrass Clinton, and by irresponsible parts of the left in order to preserve their impeccable anti-interventionist and anti-imperialist credentials. (But who, you may ask, is to provide and above all to deliver the arms if not the imperial powers? This is a question that these stalwart leftists have never answered.)

(2) The United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR)—which, whatever else it does, does not protect the Bosnian victims—administers and enforces the siege of Sarajevo. It stops and turns back those who are trying to escape; it blocks attempts by Sarajevans to obtain food from the countryside. The UN has given more food and aid to the Serbian and Croat nationalist forces—who have together murdered a civic rather than ethnically divided Bosnia—as a price of letting any aid at all through to the victims. Some UNPROFOR forces engage in the ever present black market, but it is unhelpful to write about this since that is the way even the reporters get fuel. Some UNPROFOR soldiers have accepted the Serbian nationalist troops' generous offer to use the camp brothels where Bosnian Muslim women are kept by force.

The main reason given for the inadequacies of the UN is the limited mandate of the Security Council. For that mandate we must thank the United States and its allies in the first place. It may be that it was a mistake to grant early recognition to the republics that seceded from Yugoslavia— a Yugoslavia that was clearly a lesser evil than what has followed. However, that particular Yugoslavia was no longer on offer in 1991, as Rieff points out. What was on offer was only the alternative of a more centralized Yugoslavia dominated by Slobodan Milosevic's Serbia or independence. But Western recognition without any provisions to protect the new secessionist states from military aggression by the Yugoslav army was criminally ir-

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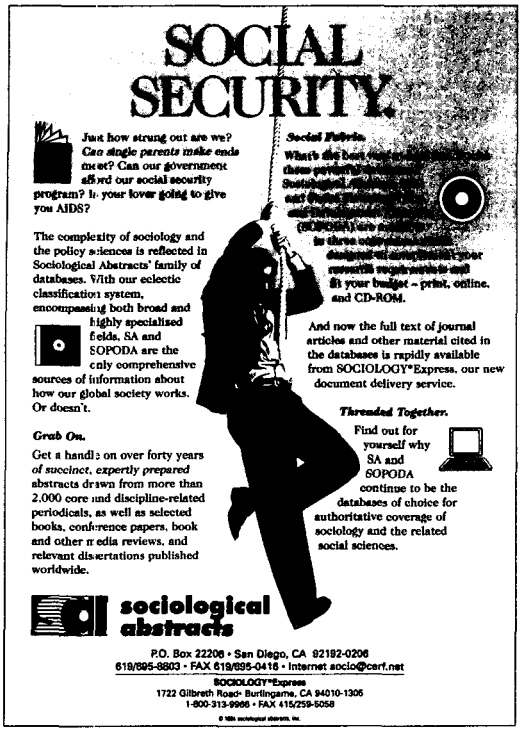
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responsible. Once Yugoslavia broke up, the war in Bosnia was a surprise only to the naive. Rieff makes clear that at least Cyrus Vance was not naive and urged that recognition be delayed. However, after the recognition of Croatia it was probably too late to save Bosnia.

A "peacekeeping" mission in Bosnia was therefore crass hypocrisy from the outset, since it had to pretend to an impossible impartiality—an impartiality between victim and perpetrator of a genocide. "Had the UN existed in 1939 we would all be speaking German" is the bitter quip of one observer. The UN's moral stature has perhaps been fatally damaged in Bosnia. At the very least it will take years to recover—as did, Rieff points out, the International Red Cross after its "inspection" and whitewash of the Nazi concentration camp at Theresienstadt. The UN senior staff constantly negotiates with the murderous Bosnian Serbian leaders, insisting that they are dealing with honorable men. Worse, since continued Bosnian resistance prolongs the war, many senior UN staffers are increasingly hostile to the Bosnian leadership. That is, the UN, and increasingly the Western powers, now want a peace in former Yugoslavia, and above all Bosnia—any peace, no matter how unjust. The victims, by continuing to resist, have become a nuisance.

The Bosnian carnage was prolonged in good part because of false hopes, nurtured by the irresponsible statements of the United States, including shameful flip-flopping by President Clinton himself, implying the possibility of U.S. or NATO intervention. Without these false hopes there might, just might, have been earlier negotiations for a more acceptable peace settlement. These hopes helped kill thousands of Bosnians. But it must never be forgotten that what actually did kill them was a murderous policy of ethnic cleansing carried out by the Bosnian Serbs.

But to report these unpleasant facts in detail opens you to savage reviews such as the one by George Kenny in the *Washington Monthly* (March 1995). Kenny seems to believe that although it was appropriate for him to resign from the State Department in protest against an immoral and incompetent U.S. policy on Bosnia, one must be measured in denouncing that policy. Thankfully, Rieff was not "measured" in his report on the Bosnian slaughterhouse. That is the book's strength. While pointing out many of the complexities of the war, Rieff keeps the focus where it should be: on the moral and political responsibility of the West and the international institutions for having permitted this genocide to go on and on and on. The dreadful thing is that there is no evidence that the West, the United States, or the UN bureaucracy have learned anything from the tragedy of former Yugoslavia and the slaughter in Bosnia. We can therefore expect this horror to be repeated, and the inconvenient victims to be forgotten as soon as possible.

The Bosnian victims are now a "refugee problem" for Western Europe. For us on the democratic left they remain a cause to support. To be sure, just as in the case of the Spanish Civil War there are complications. "Our" side in Bosnia is not composed of saints but of human beings who long for revenge for their burned villages, murdered relatives, raped women, and violated country. Yet, the CIA report on war crimes in Bosnia issued this spring makes clear that 90 percent of the crimes were committed by the Serbian nationalists. The resentment of Bosnia's Muslims is growing. Thou-

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sands of mosques and other monuments of an Islamic culture that flourished for almost five centuries have been destroyed. The Serbian nationalists are wiping out all traces of that culture in a campaign of cultural genocide in its purest form. There is almost no chance that it will ever be reversed. Some Muslims who were never religious are now turning to Islam because they believe that it was precisely their Muslim identity that permitted the West to stand by during this slow-motion genocide.

Be that as it may, Rieff's somber summary says it well: "The future of Bosnia, and possibly the future of much of Eastern Europe as well, holds not peace but the sword. After what the West and UN have done, and not done, perhaps that was to have been expected.... What is certain is that a lot of dreams have died in Bosnia during the last two and a half years: the dream that the world has a conscience; the dream that Europe is a civilized place; the dream that there is justice for the weak as well as for the strong. It should come as no surprise that the old millenarian dream that truth will set us free should die there as well." Many journalists have honorably done their best—some have died doing so—to see that the truth about Bosnia did get out. This genocide was on CNN, ITN and our front pages. The editors gave the carnage in Bosnia ample space. Yet the policy makers of the Western democracies did nothing to stop it. And the electorate will not punish them. It has other priorities, and victims of genocide, even incomplete genocide, do not have effective lobbies. □

Norman Birnbaum

SOCIALISM'S HEIRS

THE GERMAN LEFT: RED, GREEN AND BEYOND, by André Markovits and Phillip Gorski. Oxford University Press, 1993. 393 pp. $55, cloth; $16.95, paper.

This book traces the development of the German left since 1945, concentrating on what was West Germany. The main difficulty of democratic socialism in Germany, the authors argue, is the success of a welfarist version of capitalist democracy in the Federal Republic. A socialist reconstruction of German society was impossible, but a very large measure of social decency and political democratization were institutionalized. That was largely the work of a Social Democratic party that has recently stumbled over its own triumphs. The projects with which it set the agenda of German society during its years in power (1969-1982) are either out of date or no longer exclusively its own. Much of the German right accepts the welfare state, and the practice of parliamentary democracy has at last been domesticated east of the Rhine. Meanwhile, a new political formation has arisen. The Greens are the offspring of a German left once entirely dominated by the Social Democrats. They consider themselves both postcapitalist and postsocialist. The question that perplexes the authors is: who are democratic socialism's heirs, and what are their ideas?

The book uses the story of the rise of the Greens to reflect the postwar course of the left as a whole, but concentrates on the period that began with the rise of a large extraparliamentary opposition in the mid-sixties. Rather schematically, the authors' argument follows.

Until the mid-sixties, the left in the Federal Republic considered the Social Democrats central. Those seeking socialism thought its working-class traditions (and adherents) indispensable. Many in the intelligentsia thought the party the major repository of democratic tradition in Germany. In 1959, at its celebrated Bad Godesberg congress, the party formally acknowledged what it had been doing and declared itself a moderately reformist formation, responsible to the nation as a whole and not just to the working class. It also broke with its antimilitarism and accepted German membership in NATO. From the very beginning of the postwar period, the Social Democrats governed large cities and populous states. They entered national government in 1966, as junior partners to the Christian Democrats, and Willy Brandt became chancellor in 1969. Of course, they were integrated in society—but they also shaped it. A social contract gave workers social benefits and job security, and through the unions and the party, the labor force became partners in the management of market and state. That partnership relegated utopian hopes to the past (or the indefinite future), and engendered bureaucratized behavior and complacency. When Willy Brandt took as his theme "Let us dare more democracy," he did so from in-

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ner conviction, but he was also pushed by the young. A new generation thought the Social Democrats far too stolid. The Social Democrats' support of the war in Vietnam, however tepid, repelled the young. Above all, the sixties generation rejected the large elements of authoritarianism in German life. Brandt's effort to bring the youth movement into the party was partly successful, and by the time he left office in 1974, it had apparently subsided.

But appearances were deceptive and in fact, the sixties generation had created the ideological and organizational preconditions for the emergence of the Greens. Helmut Schmidt, Brandt's successor, combined didactic patriarchalism and technocratic certainty. That won him the respect of the managers and the loyalty of the old working class but impelled the sixties generation to look elsewhere. In the end, they looked to themselves. Drawing upon their experience in the social movements of the sixties, they formed the Green party. Its themes were a rejection of the bureaucratic centralism and the consumerism of West German politics. Citizens' rights were prominent in their project, as were feminism and a countercultural disdain for the insufferable stuffiness of life in Germany. (When the denim-clad Greens made their tumultuous entrance into Parliament in 1983, many older members from the established parties were near-apoplectic.) Environmental issues were real enough for them, but also had metaphoric functions. Germany's hyperindustrialization was killing its forests, and at one point the chemical industry succeeded in setting the Rhine afire. Nuclear power plants were so many time bombs.

The Greens drew, the authors suggest, upon German legacies. The youth movement of the earlier part of the century expressed romantic ideas of the sacredness of nature. The Greens transformed these notions into a systematic critique of quantitative criteria of progress, a search for qualitative concepts of public and private goods. They argued that industrial capitalism had destroyed what liberalism valued so highly, the separation of public and private spheres. The task of politics was to reclaim a lost human autonomy.

How German, the authors insist, are the Greens. They are the children and grandchildren of Hitler's majorities; their obdurate internationalism, their opposition to German militarism even in the uniform NATO, were efforts to expunge guilt. The Greens, too, had their own views of the German communist state. They reviled its repressiveness and strenuously supported the dissidents who later surfaced as the New Forum movement of the fall of 1989. The authors might have been more emphatic in noting that the Greens' behavior falsified the canard that a West German "left" was an objective accomplice of Stalinism.

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The Greens entered Parliament for the first time in 1983, increased their representation in 1987, but the West German Greens failed to clear the 5 percent barrier to representation in 1990. The Greens were so antinationalist, so critical of consumerist capitalism, that they were surprised that a large majority of East Germans wanted nothing better than to join the Federal Republic. Their 1990 campaign isolated them, and they were isolated even more by public disdain for their perennial doctrinal quarrels. Once in Parliament (and in city and state governments) they had to decide whether they were a party of fundamental opposition to industrial capitalism or new sorts of reformists, willing to compromise with others to make some progress toward their ultimate goals. The reformers have now won, and in the general disenchantment with unification, the Greens' antinational attitudes are hardly repugnant to a public that wishes to hear nothing about great new national tasks. The Greens returned to Parliament in 1994 as the third largest party and have done equally well in state and local elections since. They are now seen as integrated in the political system, as potential coalition partners of not only the Social Democrats but even of the conservative Christian Democrats.

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The authors use their narrative to confront issues far larger than the rise, fall, and revival of the Greens. They consider the fate of socialist tradition in a period in which the industrial working class constitutes a declining segment of the labor force. The welfare state has been widely accepted, and calls to defend it are hardly likely to evoke revolutionary energies. Indeed, angry provincialism, enraged corporatism and obstinate localism are the new forces in West European politics, and they are attached not to democratic socialism but to traditions of social fascism (Haider in Austria, Le Pen in France, Fini in Italy). Authoritarian protest, mobilizing resentment of cosmopolitan elites and xenophobia, threatens the Christian-socialist compromise of postwar Europe. The Greens supposed that they could supersede the Social Democrats as the party of new ideas, but it is possible that both may be submerged as bearers of a tradition of the Enlightenment that ordinary Europeans think they cannot afford. The German far right has done poorly in recent elections, but has succeeded in moving the political spectrum toward its own concerns—hatred of multiculturalism and immigration.

Germany's political and social consensus rested on a continuous increase in precisely the sorts of material production the Greens wish to reconsider. The Greens have reached the threshold of acceptability just as that consensus is disintegrating. The Greens argue that as a rich nation Germany should contribute more to the development of the impoverished nations. They have little to say to Germans threatened by the transfer of production to nations with far lower wages. Their critique of productivism, of quantitative measures of welfare, seems less compelling when welfarist capitalism finds it difficult to distribute its goods. Whether Green proposals for new standards of economic and social productivity can provide answers to a crisis that has put the Social Democrats on the defensive is a very open question.

I have departed, I see, from summary to reflecting on the issues evoked by the authors—a tribute to the strengths of a very good book. By making the Green challenge the focus of their analysis, they have written a history of recent German social democracy that does justice to its inner contradictions and problems. By setting the Greens in their national context, they also cast light on German history as a whole.

The authors, of course, can be disputed. They criticize the Greens (and many Social Democrats) for opposing the Gulf War and for their skepticism about using German "power" in the world. Suppose that the Gulf War was not a sublime venture on behalf of international order but a sordid application of a first principle of American foreign policy, that the ruling house of Saudi Arabia (and our access to cheap oil) must be preserved? As for the "power" the authors, comfortably installed in their academic chairs, call upon Germans to exercise, perhaps the Greens, far from being naive, are custodians of the national conscience. It was former President Von Weizsacker, a veteran of the war and the son of a prominent collaborator of the Nazis, who declared that the world was not eager to see yet more demonstrations of German military prowess.

The authors dislike Green criticism of Israel, but the Greens are not storm troopers in blue jeans. They are, sometimes, tactless sentimentalists. The authors are right: the Greens' pacifism is their way of coping with the horrible burden of German history. Perhaps they should be given credit for their efforts to find, in a very changed world, new definitions of "power." There is enough in the book to argue about, but the authors have written a major work of interpretive history. Not the least of its merits is the demonstration that Germany is not a society struggling with backwardness but a very new cultural and social formation. Put differently, the authors enable us to look anew at the debate on modernity. □

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Distinguishing Among Ideas

Editors:

In "Why Intellectual Conservatism Died" (Winter 1995), Michael Lind raises some important points about the difficulty of maintaining the independence critical to an intellectual when engaged in partisan political battle. Anyone who has spent a week in Washington policy circles has seen the phenomena he describes—and not only on the right.

Lind is correct in saying that "the loss of the Soviet enemy did not cause the right to crack up." There is, indeed, a lot of vitality among conservative foreign-policy specialists. But a lot of people drawn to the right by the fight against communism did not become foreign-policy experts. Nor did they venture into the intricacies of economics. Hence, they found themselves with careers pinned to the conservative cause and only one outlet for their energies and us-against-them impulses: the culture wars.

Lind is falsely nostalgic if he thinks the social issues are new to conservative intellectuals. The neoconservatives have not shifted their position on gays in particular or sex in general. Midge Decter's writings on the subject date at least to the 1970s, and her position has not changed. The *American Spectator*'s columns have always been riddled with antigay remarks.

Finally, and most important, Lind is too quick to condemn as nonintellectual those positions with which he happens to disagree. The most egregious case in point: he describes University of Chicago legal scholar Richard Epstein as "a legal theorist who argues that most federal laws against racial discrimination are unconstitutional—a view formerly associated with the John Birch Society rather than the neocons," thereby insinuating that Epstein and the Birchers occupy the same intellectual sphere. This is nonsense. Richard Epstein is nothing if not intensely intellectual. And in the *intellectual* world, how one arrives at one's conclusions is as important as, if not more important than, what those conclusions are. As the author of a thoughtful book on American culture whose policy prescriptions on trade and immigration are indistinguishable from those of Pat Buchanan, Lind would do well to respect that distinction.

Virginia I. Postrel
Los Angeles, Calif.

Ed. Note: *The writer is editor of* Reason *magazine.*

Michael Lind Replies:

My thanks to Virginia Postrel for her kind words about my essay. Unlike the conservatives, she and her fellow libertarians have resisted the temptation to derive their policy views from the needs of an electoral coalition rather than from the first principles of a genuine political philosophy.

Though it is true, as she says, that the social issues are not "new to conservative intellectuals," it is also the case that in recent years they have moved from the margins to the center of conservative concern—in part, as she suggests, because they provide former anticommunists with an "outlet for their energies and us-against-them impulses."

In my essay, I mentioned the favorable reception of Epstein by the neoconservatives only to demonstrate the drift of those former integrationist liberals toward the far right on matters of civil rights—not with the intent of impugning the reputation of Epstein, a distinguished libertarian scholar. The selective use of libertarian arguments, in matters of race relations, by conservatives who reject libertarianism in other areas should arouse suspicion, not least among Postrel and her colleagues.

Finally, it is inaccurate to write, as Postrel does, that my "policy prescriptions on trade and immigration" in my forthcoming book *The Next American Nation* (The Free Press, Summer 1995) are "indistinguishable from those of Pat Buchanan." Buchanan favors a "white America" protected from "Third World" (nonwhite) immigrants, whereas I favor a policy of restricted but continuing immigration from Latin America and Asia—a policy that, over time, would ensure that a majority of Americans would be nonwhite (according to today's crude racial categories). Nor is a pragmatic economic nationalism, which, in appropriate circumstances, might inspire support for extensive trade liberalization and the delegation of authority to transnational economic agencies, to be confused with Buchanan's crude protectionism and his implausible concerns about the loss of American "sovereignty." In short, I not only arrive at my conclusions by a different method than Buchanan, but I arrive at quite different conclusions, though the differences may not impress libertarians for whom democratic socialists, social-market liberals, one-nation Tories, and authoritarian populists are all "statists" or "collectivists." □

Against Rorty's "Reductionism"

Editors:

I have often been led down the primrose path of pragmatism by Richard Rorty: until now. With the left in current disarray, his practicality and issue-oriented political philosophy seemed appealing.

But his retort to Steven Lukes's insistence that the left is *defined* by its universalist impulses revealed the bald ahistoricism underlying Rorty's project. As a historian of the South and slavery, what struck me full force was Rorty's example drawn from antebellum American history. The idea that the antislavery movement's claim to a definition of jus-

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tice rested on the thin reed of "the cotton doesn't have to be picked by slaves, it could be done for wages" courts absurdity. What made nineteenth-century abolitionists radical by any definition of the word was precisely their "synoptic vision" of human relations and social justice. Abolitionism bore with it a worldview that challenged some of the era's most outworn shibboleths and offered striking universalist claims: that human inequality was unnatural, that race was no measure of human dignity, that all human beings would work best when not compelled to by force, to name a few.

Few people, even slaveholders, denied outright the claim that in some sense wage workers instead of slaves might pick cotton; the question for both sides was what kind of society this transformation might entail, and what its claims to justice would be. To reduce this conflict to a "simple thought" about the efficiency of agricultural labor negates the history of the Civil War, emancipation, and ultimately, the civil rights movement. Lukes is right: the left can do without this kind of reductionism in these times as well.

ALEX LICHTENSTEIN
Miami, Fla. □

Democratic Culture Wars

Editors:

How odd to find myself painted as a smug academic insider and an enemy of democratic freedom in Oliver Conant's generally fair-minded piece on Teachers for a Democratic Culture—and all because I once complained that most of the critics of American higher education don't know what the hell they're talking about when it comes to contemporary literary theory. A few years back, people like Jerry Adler (in *Newsweek*) and Dinesh D'Souza (in the *Atlantic Monthly*) were claiming that campus gay-bashers were being forced to read "Gay Lit" instead of straight white guys like Plato and Shakespeare, and that it wasn't PC to deconstruct women's writing. I thought it would be OK in intellectual circles to call this kind of illiterate garbage "illiterate garbage," so back in 1991, when I was a second-year assistant professor, I went ahead and did so in the pages of the *Village Voice*. To judge from my depiction in Conant's essay (and a similar rough sketch in Russell Jacoby's *Dogmatic Wisdom*) I underestimated the prevalence of knee-jerk anti-academicism on the American left.

But I can't apologize for having asked that the academy's critics do some homework; besides, it's not as if our more informed critics haven't found plenty to criticize in contemporary theory *anyway*. Instead, perhaps I could ask the readers of *Dissent*, if they're really interested in helping Teachers for a Democratic Culture debunk and expose the New Right, to join TDC and contribute cash and essays to our fledgling, underfunded enterprise. (TDC's address is P.O. Box 6405, Evanston, Ill. 60204.) Conant's main complaint is quite legitimate: TDC is still too insular an organization. There's nothing we'd like better than wider influence and broader distribution, and *Dissent* could help on both counts.

MICHAEL BÉRUBÉ
Urbana, Ill.

Dissent on TDC: A Dissent

Editors:

We welcome Oliver Conant's analysis of *Democratic Culture* in the Spring 1995 issue of *Dissent*. His criticisms are instructive, although we wish his tone had better reflected the commitment he shares with us to counter the right's "culture war" agenda. His piece expresses an animus toward the new academic left that, sadly, continues the unhelpful intramural squabbling between the professors and the journalists. The dire straits of the left today ought to inspire us to seek common ground rather than always blowing up each other's words.

Comparing *Democratic Culture* to *Heterodoxy* (a low blow!), Conant finds seething "ideological animus." He complains that Gregory Jay is guilty of "indiscriminate lumping of opponents" in an essay where he blames various left liberals (including the late *Dissent* editor Irving Howe) for "relying uncritically on sources like Dinesh D'Souza." But this passage does not lump together the views of this varied group; rather, Jay points to the fact of their common, puzzling failure to question the stories told by unreliable right-wing journalists. Conant contends that Christina Hoff Sommers's arguments in *Who Stole Feminism?* "deserve consideration," but blames *Democratic Culture* for printing too many attacks on the book. We believe that the well-funded campaign for Sommers's book produced an uncritical acceptance of her arguments in the editorial pages of the *Wall Street Journal*, on the cover of *National Review*, in the prime-time coverage of CBS's *Eye to Eye* and ABC's *20/20*, in interviews published in *Penthouse* and *Men's Health*, and even in a report in the illustrious *National Enquirer*. Publishing a few critical reviews of Sommers's errors (including her highly suspect statistic, repeated by Conant, that anorexia is linked to only fifty-four deaths a year) is an act of dissent of which we are proud.

Conant says that the Spring 1993 essay on Johnetta Cole is "careless" because her opponents are accused of using "guilt by association tactics of the McCarthy Era." He rejects this analogy by noting that McCarthyism "traded in spurious charges." But this misunderstands the nature of McCarthyism. What made McCarthyism so vile was the use of this association to condemn people who had done no wrong. Should candidates for jobs in education be banned for past criticisms of American foreign policy?

Conant accuses *Democratic Culture* of "propagating the pieties of advanced literary criticism," asserting that our pages provide "plentiful instances" of writing like the letter by Mas'ud Zavarzadeh and Donald Morton. But he cites none of these instances, probably because there is nothing else in *Democratic Culture* resembling that letter, as Zavarzadeh and Morton (who are not TDC members, and were replying to an article that attacked them) would be the first to tell you.

TDC never claimed that campus "PC" has been "invented by the right." Rather, we argue that the exaggerated PC anecdotes are hardly evidence that a totalitarian left controls American campuses. *Democratic Culture* has printed many pieces criticizing real examples of "PC" by both the left and the right. As for Zavarzadeh and Morton, they are virtually

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powerless in academia; when it comes to ideological intimidation, it is Zavarzadeh (not the conservatives on his campus) who regularly receives death threats. We will continue to print disagreements with colleagues on the left, but we will not banish their voices from our pages. Instead, we will challenge them on an intellectual level while we refute the right's myth that PC storm troopers now dominate American campuses.

GREGORY JAY
JOHN K. WILSON
GERALD GRAFF

ED. NOTE. *The writers are co-coordinators of Teachers for a Democratic Culture.*

Oliver Conant Replies:

Michael Bérubé is a witty and ingratiating writer and I have enjoyed his journalism. But I am puzzled that he's puzzled. The remark I quoted, which is cited in a TDC flyer, complains that "recent literary theory is so rarely accorded the privilege of representing itself in nonacademic forums that journalists, disgruntled professors, embittered ex-graduate students and their family and friends now feel entitled to say anything they like about the academy." This disdain for the uncredentialed strikes me as insiderish, smug, and misconceived. Professor Bérubé is "accorded" the opportunity of representing the claims of theory because he writes well; most adherents to theory do not. The imputation that I "painted" him as an "enemy of democratic freedom" is preposterous.

Gregory Jay, John K. Wilson, and Gerald Graff are quite right that the Stalinoid ranting in the letter of Mas'ud Zavarzadeh and Donald Morton is not on display elsewhere in their newsletter, and I am sorry I implied otherwise. I also erred in suggesting that TDC believes that campus PC has been "invented" by the right. The writers' solicitude for Zavarzadeh and Morton, however, seems exaggerated. Calling them "virtually powerless in academia" almost gives them victim status—but are they only "virtually" tenured?

Gregory Jay would like to be understood as not having lumped what he now carefully calls the "views" of "various left-liberals," But in the original article he permits himself such expressions as "Schlesinger and company," and "the debilitating liberal-conservative convergence." "A few critical reviews" is not an accurate description of what the editors were up to with Sommers's book; consideration is not the same as orchestrated denunciation. Johnetta Cole was denied a political appointment because it was revealed that she held repellent political views well into the mid-eighties. This is not McCarthyism, except perhaps in the Wonderland sense of words meaning whatever their holders wish them to mean.

I question the writers' main contention that we on the left ought to cease "blowing up each other's words." If the words in question amount to name-calling, posturing, and cant, then why not blow them up? The traditional culture of the independent left is ceaseless and rigorous criticism. That the left is in such "dire straits" today may in large part be due to its obsession with seeking common ground with fools, which in practice means signing on to the worst identity politics has on offer. "No enemies on the left" was a bad slogan in the old days, and it's no good now. □

Reappraising Cardoso

Editors:

The most striking feature about "Social Democracy Moves South" (Spring 1995) is Albert O. Hirschman's entirely *uncritical* appraisal of newly elected Brazilian President Fernando Henrique Cardoso. Rather than revealing the weaknesses *and* strengths of the new government, Hirschman simply reproduces Cardoso's campaign rhetoric.

In lieu of contesting Hirschman's unduly optimistic claims, I would like to highlight some ugly truths about the Cardoso administration. Cardoso has allied himself with some of the most reactionary parties in Brazilian political life. Vice President Marco Maciel from the Liberal Front party (PFL) is what Brazilians refer to as a *filho da ditadura*, a puppet of the dictatorship. For more than two decades, Maciel and other members of the Cardoso government supported a regime that committed countless human rights violations, plundered the national economy, and rendered state social services virtually dysfunctional. It is true that people change, but it is highly unlikely that these authoritarian technocrats will suddenly champion social democracy.

Cardoso also draws a significant portion of his support from the oligarchy. Powerful landowners, media barons, and the neoliberal elite strongly back the new president. In order to enact social reforms, Cardoso will have to overcome their opposition. It seems unlikely that he will betray the same people who catapulted him into the presidential palace.

Hirschman does not need to look north to find the enemies of social democracy—they occupy numerous posts in the Brazilian government.

MARCELO IRAJA DE ARAUJO HOFFMAN
Richmond, Ind. □

Politically Admirable, Grammatically Unsound

Editors:

I was happy to see my mini-essay on book indexing published on the last page of the Spring 1995 issue. But in glancing with authorial satisfaction at my own piece, I noticed that, in the version that ran in your pages (or let me say "our" pages, since I sit on the board of editors), a word that I had not written managed to appear two times. That word was "humanity," employed as the subject of a sentence. "Humanity," in the specific sense in which it was used, is a four-syllable latinate near-synonym for the perfectly clear one-syllable Anglo-Saxon word "man," which is the word that i actually wrote. Sometime between the submission of my article and its appearance in print, "man" had been changed—two times—into "humanity."

I was allowed to see a copy of the page proofs, and of course I should have noticed the change and should have inquired about it. But my eye ran quickly down the column of print and the editorial change has come to my attention only now. And only now do I see what must have happened.

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The syllabic expansion of my very simple word is explained in an insidious note that appears in every issue called "To Our Contributors." Point (3) of that note says, "Please use inclusive language so that we don't have to make adjustments during editing." "Inclusive language," in this context, means language that could not possibly be interpreted as referring only to males, for instance by a reader who chooses not to accept that, in English, words like "man," "he" and "his" can, in certain contexts, refer to a universal human, neither male nor female. "Inclusive language," that is, means the jargon of today. In this case, it means jargon that is multisyllabically latinate—which, for most speakers of the English language, is harder, not easier, to understand. "Inclusive language," in sum, is an Orwellian phrase.

I am writing this letter because this is the second time in a very short period that I have discovered that one of my words has been altered on its way to print by a copy editor in the imagined interest of the struggle for women's equality. In the *New Yorker* magazine last year I published an essay about the relations between African-Americans and American Jews, which, when it was reprinted by Delacorte in my own anthology of essays on that topic, was editorially "adjusted" away from the correct word "his" (in a context that clearly referred to a universal abstract person) in favor of the three-word formula "his or her" (which is a phrase that refers to people who are specifically male or female, therefore are less obviously to be regarded as abstractly universal).

Is the world suffering right now from worse oppressions than those that are inflicted on the English language by politically admirable and grammatically unsound copy editors? Yes, and I am confident that, in the rest of this issue of *Dissent*, those other oppressions are being very intelligently addressed, and in bigger print than is used on this letters page. But there is a place for small complaints, too.

Paul Berman
New York, N.Y.

Maxine Phillips Replies for the Editors:

We, too, are happy that *Dissent* has room for small complaints, even those directed at other publishers. But in 1995 do we have to defend a policy of inclusive language? In fact, because *Dissent* is not dogmatic, we have a flexible policy, and always restore the original wording when an author believes that his meaning or melody has suffered. (And we do mean *his*. To date, no woman has objected to inclusive language.) Therefore, if you write for *Dissent* we urge you first, to do so in a spirit of democratic inclusiveness that takes into account linguistic research and developments of the past twenty-five years (see *The Handbook of Nonsexist Writing*, by Casey Miller and Kate Swift, for starters); and second, to read the galleys carefully when we send them to you. □

And For a Change of Pace: Some Praise

Editors:

I've been reading *Dissent* for twenty years, since high school. Like many of your loyal readers, I was worried that losing Irving Howe would cripple the magazine. May I congratulate Michael Walzer, Mitchell Cohen, and the editorial board for the superb job they have done?

The last few issues have been lively, provocative, and thoughtful. I particularly enjoyed George Packer's article, "Why We Are in Haiti," Joanne Barkan's "Welfare State, Fare Thee Well?" Michael Lind's "The Death of Intellectual Conservatism," and Susannah Heschel's "Feminists in Cairo," in the Winter 1995 issue. Elliot Sclar's piece on "Myths of Privatization" in Summer 1994 was a badly needed debunking of the new gospel.

The new format is fun: who would ever have expected *Dissent* to print Paul Berman's Last Page on the joys of perusing book indexes or Nick Mills's piece on the baseball strike?

Dissent has kept the intellectual rigor and core values that Howe imbued it with, while broadening its use of analytic reporting and freeing the individual voices of its writers. Ironically, the diversity and individuality of *Dissent*'s editors appeared most vividly in the issue that showcased tributes to Irving's memory. Moving portraits of a giant of American socialist thought, the tributes revealed the breadth and variety of the socialist intellectuals Irving had gathered around him. *Dissent*'s editors and writers wrote, unusually, in the first person; readers could see just how diverse are their intellectual and political backgrounds, experiences on the left, and routes to joining *Dissent*'s circle.

One of the greatest monuments to Irving Howe is this unspoken evidence that he did, in fact, succeed in orchestrating a generational succession. Thanks, Michael and Mitchell, yourselves part of that generational succession, for letting those diverse voices sing.

Miriam Bensman
New York, N.Y. □

To Letter Writers

- *We welcome succinct letters from our readers. But because we have a long "lead time" for each issue, you have to send us your letter within three weeks after getting an issue of* Dissent *in order to get it into the next issue. So if you want to write about something that you like, or dislike, in or about* Dissent, *please do it quickly.*

- *Letters must be kept to about 500 words, typed, double-spaced, and carry the full address and name of the sender. We reserve the right to edit letters down to fit our space and to choose which shall be printed. We are unable to acknowledge letters. Letters will not be returned to senders unless they are accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes.* □

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The Last Page

I have been reading in the newspapers that the CIA is in trouble (in the same way, almost, that you and I might be in trouble). With the end of the cold war, it has lost its raison d'être; influential senators think that it should close up shop. At the very least, its budget may actually be looked at by some of its appointed watchdogs or by one or two crusading journalists. Because I am an old-left supporter of big government, I realize that I will have to come to its defense. All those jobs can't be lost to the public sector. The spies and "operatives" who work in the field (on the left, we have always been in favor of the field, where theory gets practiced); the managers and controllers of the spies and "operatives"; the public relations people who make up all the cover stories; and the financial experts who hide the expenses: there must be something useful they can do.

Their own first round of inventive efforts is disappointing. They propose to move into the field of economic security. Imagine, they tell us, that a group of Bulgarian business executives is plotting to steal the formula of Procter and Gamble's revolutionary new detergent: they will uncover, expose, and foil the plot, thereby defending the material interests of all American citizens. What's good for Procter and Gamble is good for America. Maybe so, but this proposal just won't float. I am an old leftist who has come to recognize, along with everyone else, the value of markets. Procter and Gamble will have to hire its own spies. It will have to privatize the espionage business, recruit American tourists traveling to Bulgaria, build a network, send one of its vice presidents (under a suitable pseudonym) to Sofia as control. The CIA should come in only when market incentives fail, when the need for state action is as obvious as...the need for prisons, say.

What, then, can it do? Surely the great American corporations, most of them multinational by now, have ample incentive to spy on their rivals around the world (and on each other). They don't need the government's help to do that, and given their current ideological position, they presumably won't ask for it. But they have no incentive to spy on themselves. They are widely suspected—among my friends on the left, obviously, but not only there—of ignoring or breaking American laws. They don't pay the taxes they are supposed to pay, they bribe local officials wherever they do business, they export things they shouldn't export to terrorist states that our government has embargoed, they violate environmental regulations, and so on. Their lawyers and in-house economists claim that they are not doing any of these things; and that they could not survive in the competitive marketplace if they didn't do them; and that sometime soon, in any case, they are going to stop doing them. Obviously, it is not in their interest to check out any of these claims.

So, a modest proposal: this is something that the CIA could do. It could enforce American law on American citizens and companies doing business abroad. Everyone agrees that the United States can't be the world's police force. But surely we could police our own very substantial segment of the new global capitalism. That might begin to justify the intelligence budget, and it would provide good public service jobs for a lot of redundant spies.

—M.W. □

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